

Frequently Asked Questions

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Will the 2012 Edition of the English Language Development (ELD) Standards replace the 2007 Edition?

We consider the 2012 Edition to be an additional resource for educators working in elementary and secondary schools with English language learners (ELLs). Note that from 2004 to 2007 and now to this 2012 edition, WIDA has maintained the identical ELD standards. What has evolved over time is our understanding of how to characterize the academic language needed for ELLs to access grade-level content and succeed in school. Therefore, the 2012 Edition of the ELD Standards should be used alongside the 2007 Edition so that educators have more examples of how WIDA represents its standards. The Resource Guide to the 2007 Edition also provides critical information about the flexibility of the standards, along with other valuable information.

2. Why was the 2012 Edition created?

There are several reasons why WIDA created this edition.

First, the number of member states in the WIDA Consortium has grown substantially in the last five years and we believe that all our states should have input into how we represent the language development standards.

Second, as states have implemented the standards, we have listened to educators. As a result, we have made some of the more implicit elements of our standards framework explicit and have included representations of language development outside of the core content areas.

Third, as the vast majority of states have adopted the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and Mathematics, we wanted to ensure that the connections between content and language standards are clear as states set out to implement standards-driven reform.

3. What are the changes to terminology in this edition?

First, notice we have transitioned to language *development* standards to emphasize the process of developing an additional language in contrast with language *proficiency*, which refers to measuring language development at specific points in time. Thus, we retain use of the phrase ‘language proficiency’ in instances referencing the proficiency levels measured by WIDA assessments.

Second, language proficiency level 2 is now labeled ‘Emerging’ rather than ‘Beginning’. Some educators thought that ‘Beginning’ could be too easily confused with level 1, while others said that in differentiating language instruction for ELLs, teachers often grouped students as Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced. For these reasons, we believe that ‘Emerging’ is a more descriptive term.

The criterion ‘Language Forms and Conventions’ replaces ‘Language Control’ from our previous edition. There are two primary reasons for this change. First, this criterion reflects our CAN DO Philosophy (see <http://wida.us/aboutUs/AcademicLanguage/>); we felt that ‘Language Control’ placed too much emphasis on the errors made by ELLs. In addition, we wish to recognize ‘Forms and Conventions’ and its tie to the Language section of the Common Core State Standards. Another criterion, ‘Discourse Complexity’ replaces ‘Linguistic Complexity’ to emphasize how oral and written language is organized into different genres and text types.

4. Why are there fewer strands in this edition?

When we asked educators about what should be included in a new edition, they emphasized that they didn’t need as many strands, rather, they preferred additional guidance in unpacking the meaning of strands. Therefore, we are building on the 2007 Edition by making the strands more transparent to teachers. And, as in our previous editions, the standards matrices are not prescriptive; we invite teachers to adopt, create, innovate, and ultimately, to customize the standards matrices to best meet the needs of their ELLs and language education programs.

5. Where are the PreKindergarten strands?

PreKindergarten does not have a presence in this standards edition. In the coming years, WIDA plans to address the unique developmental and linguistic nature of three- and four-year-olds in a separate document.

6. Who are the audiences for the 2012 Edition?

We encourage all educators who work with ELLs to become familiar with the document. With this edition, language teachers and content teachers can more readily co-construct plans for student learning, differentiate language instruction, and create classroom language assessments. In addition, administrators and school leaders can support teachers in their efforts to infuse academic language across the curriculum and be advocates for ELLs and their families.

7. What is the timetable for release of the 2012 Edition?

Presently, we anticipate that the 2012 Edition will be available in spring 2012 with additional resources related to its implementation to follow.

THE STANDARDS MATRICES

8. What elements have been added to the standards matrix?

There are several new elements:

- a. A direct *connection* to the Common Core and other state content standards,
- b. A uniform *cognitive function* across the levels of language proficiency,
- c. *Topical, grade-level vocabulary* related to the content-based example, and
- d. A *context for language use* descriptive of the genre/text type, register, roles and identities, and tasks in which the strand is situated.

9. How are the language function and cognitive function related?

The cognitive function relates the mental process involved in learning while the language function communicates the linguistic process required in processing or conveying a message. In the 2012 edition, we have added a uniform underlying cognitive function to each strand to show that even at the lowest levels of English language proficiency, students engage in higher level thinking.

10. Why was grade-level ‘Topical Vocabulary’ added to the strands of language development?

ELLs should be *exposed* to the rigor and challenge of grade-level topical vocabulary within differentiated language instruction that includes multiple sensory, graphic, and interactive supports. We strongly believe that for students to reach their academic potential, they must have ample opportunities to examine, explore, and experiment with key grade-level concepts from the earliest levels of language proficiency.

11. What is the purpose of the ‘Context for Language Use’?

This new element of the standards matrix helps teachers think about how to implement a strand of model performance indicators using an authentic instructional setting; it also reinforces the notion that language is never learned in isolation but is bound by the situation in which it occurs.

12. In the ‘Connection’ element, there is a reference to the Common Core or state academic content standards. What other connections to content standards can be found within the standards matrix?

Some other examples of connections to the Common Core and state content standards include:

- Grade-level clusters are now individual grades;
- The topical vocabulary reflects grade-level language related to the example topic;
- The ‘context for language use’ situates the strand of model performance indicators within informational and narrative text reflective of multiple text types/ genres that are listed in standards documents;
- In the amplified matrices, some criteria of our performance definitions, namely, ‘Language Forms and Conventions’ and ‘Vocabulary Usage’, are also present in the Language section of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.

Additionally, the results of a formal alignment study conducted between the WIDA ELP Standards, 2007 Edition and the Common Core State Standards (see <http://wida.us/research/agenda/Alignment/index.aspx> for the full 2011 report), has influenced the breadth and depth of this new edition.

13. What is an amplified strand?

For each grade level, we offer a sample amplified strand where, in addition to the new elements, we exemplify the three criteria that constitute our Performance Definitions: Discourse Complexity, Language Forms and Conventions, and Vocabulary Usage. It is important to emphasize that the language shown at each level of the amplified matrices represents an example, and that educators may choose to focus on different aspects of the criteria in working with students at each level of language proficiency.

There is no uniform path to language proficiency, and students often enter with different constellations of linguistic knowledge and skills. The amplified matrices are meant to stimulate discussion around the academic language of the content areas and serve as a collaborative resource, not as a guide to planning language lessons differentiated across the five levels of language proficiency, as customization to your students and local objectives is essential.

14. What are complementary strands?

The new complementary strands extend the application of the ELD standards to other important areas of learning, including visual arts, music and performing arts, health and physical education, technology, and multiculturalism. We wish to recognize that academic language permeates schooling and that all teachers are in fact language teachers.

IMPLEMENTATION

15. Will supplemental resources be developed to help teachers and school leaders implement the amplified matrices?

Absolutely! In due time, we expect to design instructional modules, broadcast webinars, and create videos to post on our website. In addition, we plan to offer professional learning opportunities to states and districts through consortium membership or by request. Please take our 2012 Standards-based Professional Development Interest Survey (link available at <http://wida.us/standards/elp.aspx>) to help us design these initiatives.

16. How might educators of ELLs begin to use the new elements and amplified matrices?

Gradually. Take time to digest the new elements as well as the amplified and complementary strands. Consider forming professional learning teams or study groups to probe academic language more in depth and present the information to other educators. Carve out some dedicated meeting time to plan, alongside content teachers, how to implement the latest representations of the language development standards.

17. How will the 2012 Edition of the ELD Standards impact ACCESS for ELLs?

Over the next couple years, the new terminology and criteria from the Performance Definitions from the 2012 Edition will be integrated into ACCESS for ELLs materials. Educators may begin to notice the new and revised terms such as ‘Level 2-Emerging’ as soon as spring 2012, while other changes, such as modifications to rubrics and the addition of items related to new topics, will take several years to implement.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

Please contact the WIDA Help Desk at toll free 1-866-276-7735 or help@wida.us with any additional questions or concerns about the English Language Development Standards, 2012 Edition Draft Release.