

WIDA/GSE Alignment

Introduction

Development of the Alignment

- The high school alignments were drafted in 2007-2008 by a group of volunteer teachers: 13 ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) teachers, one math teacher, and two science teachers; they were revised in 2008-2009 by another volunteer group: 13 ESOL teachers, two math teachers, one science, one social studies, one language arts.
- The project was part of the federally-funded ELL Co-op program, developed by the University of New Hampshire, in partnership with the NH Department of Education Title III Office, the Manchester School District, and the Nashua School District.
- Teachers met four full days each year, working in four groups by content area expertise; special thanks are due to the non-ESOL math, language arts, science, and social studies teachers who provided vital content-area expertise in those subjects.
- The result is an alignment of selected reading, writing, math, science, and social studies Grade Span Expectations (GSEs) with model performance indicators for those subjects, based on the state-adopted ESOL standards.

Goals of the Alignment

1. To give ESOL and content area teachers information that they can use to differentiate instruction by proficiency level.
2. To provide a concrete representation of the WIDA standards so ESOL students have access to all academic content.
3. To define the ESOL curriculum in a way that will focus on the content areas of math, science, social studies, and language arts, and will assist in writing course competencies.
4. To provide a reference of appropriate ESOL teaching strategies for content area teachers.
5. To ensure that ESOL teachers know what content is being taught in content area classes, and that content area teachers know what can be expected of students at a particular level of language proficiency.

New Hampshire's English Language Proficiency Standards

- The standards were developed by the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium. This consortium consists of 16 states plus

the District of Columbia, which have all adopted common English language proficiency standards and assessments.

- There are five standards:
 1. English language learners **communicate** for **Social** and **Instructional** purposes within the school setting.
 2. English language learners **communicate** information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of **Language Arts**.
 3. English language learners **communicate** information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of **Mathematics**.
 4. English language learners **communicate** information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of **Science**.
 5. English language learners **communicate** information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of **Social Studies**.
- The format of the WIDA standards is as follows:
 - There are five grade spans: PreK-K, 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12.
 - Each grade span includes the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
 - There are five language proficiency levels: Entering, Beginning, Developing, Expanding, and Bridging (see Appendix A for descriptions of proficiency levels and a language acquisition chart).
 - Model performance indicators (MPIs) are written for each language domain across the five proficiency levels.
 - WIDA's MPIs provide a framework for creating performance indicators for particular situations, using the topics and strategies needed to implement diverse curricula in diverse classrooms.

Format of the Alignment

- There are three essential elements of a WIDA MPI:
 1. **Language function** is the task ELLs (English language learners) do to demonstrate performance (see Appendix B for appropriate tasks in each subject at each proficiency level).
 2. **Topic** is what the students are expected to communicate (topics come from the selected NH GSEs).
 3. **Support** is the sensory, graphic, or interactive scaffolding used to help ELLs show their knowledge (support is essential through Level 4; optional at Level 5) (see Appendix C for examples of various kinds of supports).
 4. **Examples** are optional; they clarify or extend the meaning of the MPI (e.g., things teachers, students, or texts might say; appropriate supports; subtopics, etc.).
- These WIDA/GSE alignments consist of new MPIs written for the selected GSEs:
 - MPIs were written for all tested GSEs in math, science, reading, writing, and oral communication; they were written for representative topics in social studies.

- There are five MPIs for each GSE, one for each level of language proficiency.
- The language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are combined in the alignment MPIs.
- The MPIs will need to be adapted; they are meant to be **models**. Teachers should change the topic, the language function, and/or the support as needed (lists of tasks and supports in Appendices B and C are helpful for adapting MPIs).

English Language Learners

All students come to school with different backgrounds. Teachers can never assume that all their students have the same background knowledge, or learn in the same way. What is true of all students is doubly true of English language learners, because they come from much more varied backgrounds.

- Language:
 - All classrooms have students with different dialects and different levels of experience with school language.
 - These differences are greater with ELLs because language is the basic medium of communication in the classroom. Second languages must be taught and learned; it is every teacher's responsibility to help students who are still learning English.
- Culture:
 - Any group has multiple cultures and sub-cultures, often determined by ethnicity, but also by family background, interests and abilities, or social class.
 - Cultural differences among students from different language backgrounds are greater than differences among students who all speak the same language because cultures are closely related to languages. ELLs should be encouraged to maintain their native culture as they learn to live comfortably within a new culture, just as they should be encouraged to maintain their native language as they learn English.
- Family and friends:
 - Teachers recognize the influence of students' families and peers on their behavior, and how this influence creates differences in achievement.
 - ELLs may demonstrate greater differences because they are living with two languages and cultures. Some strongly identify with their family's language and culture, and resist assimilation. Others are so anxious to be "American" that they create communication difficulties with their families. Teachers need to be aware of these issues and help students work through them.

- School experiences:
 - All students come to a particular classroom with different school experiences and expectations. For example, some students are used to independent group learning, while others have never done anything except teacher-directed individual work.
 - ELLs may have ways of learning that are very different from any found in U. S. schools, because classroom organization and participation are culturally-determined. Teachers need to respect the school customs that ELLs bring with them, while at the same time helping them learn to participate in different ways.

- Prior knowledge:
 - What one student learns during school is never the same as what another student learns, even if both have gone through the same school.
 - These differences increase greatly for ELLs. They may have gone to schools that put very different emphases on what is important to learn; they may have lost continuity because of attending many different schools; they may have been out of school completely because of wars or other disasters. When teaching ELLs, it is essential to find out what they already know about each new topic introduced, and to provide whatever background knowledge they need to be successful.

- Physical or emotional barriers:
 - Any classroom contains students with special physical, emotional, or learning needs.
 - ELLs may also have physical challenges, emotional problems, or learning difficulties. In addition, language disorders may not be recognized if they are confused with normal second language acquisition processes. Emotional barriers may have been created by trauma or through being uprooted from everything familiar in their lives. Teachers must remember that strategies and accommodations must be adapted for each student's individual needs.

How to Use This Alignment

- Model Performance Indicators are exactly that: *models*; any or all of the three elements can and should be transformed to create PIs that fit specific situations.
- This document will show ESOL teachers exactly what the expectations are for different content areas; the topics of the MPis in each subject area will help them make decisions about what to emphasize as they help students with material from all content areas.
- This document will help content area teachers teach their subjects to ELLs. It is a valuable resource of appropriate tasks and supports: the tasks provide concrete examples of the kinds of things ELLs can be expected to do at each

proficiency level; the supports describe sensory, graphic, and interactive strategies that will help ELLs understand and produce the language needed to accomplish the tasks.

- The strengths and needs of ESOL teachers and content area teachers complement each other; they should use each other as resources in order to get the greatest possible benefit from this document.
- This document will help both ESOL and content teachers avoid the common pitfall of “teaching down” to English language learners. ELLs with the necessary prerequisite knowledge can learn grade-level content while their language is still quite limited. Their language output may be rudimentary, but their understanding of concepts can be quite sophisticated.
- In some cases, the needs of particular ELL students cannot be met with this curriculum alignment. For example, students with limited prior formal education will lack background knowledge and literacy skills, which will need to be acquired before they can accomplish many of the tasks in this high school-level alignment. Alignments for all grade levels are being written; teachers should use the alignments that match their students’ working grade levels.