

**English Language Proficiency  
and Core Content Standards:  
Linking Documents for the  
Instruction of English Language Learners**

Michigan Department of Education  
Office of Field Services  
Special Populations Unit

# English Language Proficiency and Core Content Standards: Linking Documents for the Instruction of English Language Learners

## Introduction

The *English Language Proficiency and Core Content Standards: Linking Documents for the Instruction of ELLs* is provided by the Michigan Department of Education to assist local districts and other educational agencies to better serve the academic needs of English Language Learners (ELLs). While ELLs develop English language proficiency, they are also expected to meet the same academic content and achievement standards that all Michigan students are expected to meet. Indeed, current research has shown that language proficiency is further developed through academic application. Core curriculum subjects such as English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies provide an essential context for English language development and overall academic achievement.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:

- Establish correlation between the English Language Proficiency Standards and Benchmarks (ELP) and English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science and social studies Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCE) and High School Content Expectations (HSCE).
- Support teachers in designing instruction and assessment that takes into account the influence of language proficiency on student learning.
- Illustrate how ELL students are able to demonstrate comprehension of content while fully participating in classroom instruction.
- Provide sample performance indicators (SPI) that begin to describe what ELLs know and are able to do in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies based on the level of English language proficiency.

## Teacher Use

To effectively use the *English Language Proficiency and Core Content Standards: Linking Documents for the Instruction of ELLs*, teachers should keep in mind:

- ELLs in Michigan schools use English at a variety of proficiency levels with differing strengths in each domain (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension). See APPENDIX A.
- Current linguistic, psychological, and educational research offers insight into the process of learning additional languages and the pedagogy that supports second language learning. Language learning takes place in the community and in classrooms. In the school setting several general principles underlie successful language teaching and learning for all students. See APPENDIX B.
- Involving ELLs in content classrooms does not supplant their need for sustained English language development through high quality instruction appropriate for second language acquisition. *The Michigan English Language Proficiency Standards and Benchmarks* is the foundation for the development and implementation of a systematic program of English instruction for ELLs so they can strengthen their knowledge and skills to successfully participate in all areas of the general education content curriculum. See APPENDIX C.
- ELL students may not understand classroom instruction provided completely in English and/or may be unable to demonstrate understanding using only English.

- Special considerations should be given to ELLs at the Basic level of English proficiency.
  - One of the most challenging aspects of teaching required academic content to ELLs at the Basic 1A English language proficiency level is the issue of authentic, meaningful comprehension. Students may have interrupted formal education (“SIFE” students) and lack prior knowledge and skills in content as well as school experience. SIFE ELLs need study skills as well as content background instruction prior to accessing grade level subject area content.
  - ELLs at the Basic 1B language proficiency level have consistent formal schooling in the home/primary language that provides them with background content knowledge in some academic disciplines. Because the ELL Basic 1B students have no or very little English language proficiency, students need to engage in instruction that is not totally language dependent.
  
- ELLs benefit when there is professional collaboration among ESL/bilingual staff and classroom content teachers.
  
- This is not a content curriculum. It describes how teachers might assess what ELLs know and are able to do in a specific content area as a result of classroom instruction.
  
- The sample performance indicators (SPI) in the Linking Documents are examples of how ELL students might demonstrate their knowledge and abilities in content area subjects with consideration of their English language proficiency level.
 

[The various Michigan Department of Education content expectations documents begin with broad “strands” (ELA and mathematics) or “disciplines” (science and social studies). Within the content area strands or disciplines, there are standards “domains” (ELA and mathematics) or “standards” (science and social studies) that further define topics in the content area. Performance expectations show what students should know and be able to do at each grade level K-8 and in the specific high school content area disciplines.]
  
- The sample performance indicators (SPI) in the Linking Documents were developed in relation to the topics of selected domains or standards within a content strand or discipline. The SPI in this document are similar to the extensive grade level performance expectation statements that appear in all of the GLCEs or HSCEs - but do not supplant them. The SPI are only samples and do not cover all of the grade level performance expectations.

## Resource Documents

Teachers providing standards-based instruction are encouraged to use the *Michigan English Language Proficiency Standards for K-12 Schools* and the *Michigan Grade Level/High School Content Expectations* – as well as their district curriculum for the discipline they are teaching - to design lessons and assessments inclusive of their English language learners.

### English Language Acquisition

- *Michigan English Language Proficiency Standards for K-12 Schools*  
[http://michigan.gov/documents/English\\_Language\\_Proficiency\\_K-12\\_Standards\\_103705\\_7.pdf](http://michigan.gov/documents/English_Language_Proficiency_K-12_Standards_103705_7.pdf)

### Content Expectations

- *Michigan English Language Arts Grade Level Content Expectations*  
[http://michigan.gov/documents/ELAGLCE\\_140483\\_7.pdf](http://michigan.gov/documents/ELAGLCE_140483_7.pdf)
- *Michigan Mathematics Grade Level Content Expectations*  
[http://michigan.gov/documents/MathGLCE\\_140486\\_7.pdf](http://michigan.gov/documents/MathGLCE_140486_7.pdf)

- *Michigan Science Grade Level Content Expectations*  
[http://michigan.gov/documents/mde/Complete\\_Science\\_GLCE\\_12-12-07\\_218314\\_7.pdf](http://michigan.gov/documents/mde/Complete_Science_GLCE_12-12-07_218314_7.pdf)
- *Michigan Social Studies Grade Level Content Expectations*  
[http://michigan.gov/documents/mde/SSGLCE\\_218368\\_7.pdf](http://michigan.gov/documents/mde/SSGLCE_218368_7.pdf)
- *Michigan High School Content Expectations: English Language Arts*  
[http://michigan.gov/documents/ELA11-14open1\\_142201\\_7.pdf](http://michigan.gov/documents/ELA11-14open1_142201_7.pdf)
- *Michigan High School Content Expectations: Mathematics*  
[http://michigan.gov/documents/Math11-14-open1\\_142202\\_7.pdf](http://michigan.gov/documents/Math11-14-open1_142202_7.pdf)
- *Michigan High School Content Expectations: Science*  
[http://michigan.gov/documents/mde/Essential\\_Science\\_204486\\_7.pdf](http://michigan.gov/documents/mde/Essential_Science_204486_7.pdf)
- *Michigan High School Content Expectations: Social Studies*  
[http://michigan.gov/documents/mde/SS\\_HSCE\\_210739\\_7.pdf](http://michigan.gov/documents/mde/SS_HSCE_210739_7.pdf)

# Document Design

English Language Proficiency (ELP) Levels



Grade Level & Content "Strand" or Content "Discipline"	Basic ELP Level 1A	Basic ELP Level 1B	Low Intermediate ELP Level 2	High Intermediate ELP Level 3	Proficient ELP Level 4
"Domain" or "Standard" (topic)	SPI	SPI	SPI	SPI	SPI
	SPI	SPI	SPI	<b>SPI</b>	SPI

Reference to Content Expectation Documents (GLCEs or HSCes)



Sample Performance Indicators (SPI)



## Expectations of ELL Student Performance

A clear understanding of an ELL student’s background knowledge is critical for a classroom teacher to be able to design effective and challenging instruction. While some ELL students have limited or no prior knowledge in a specific content/subject area, other students may have a rich educational background comparable to or exceeding their grade-level English-speaking peers. Excellent students don’t always speak English well. Instruction conducted solely in English may not provide an adequate learning environment for students to demonstrate existing content knowledge or to further expand their knowledge of new content. A new ELL student’s academic achievement is not necessarily equivalent to their ability to speak English.

There is a continuum of ways students begin to demonstrate thinking/knowledge when they are not yet proficient in all skill domains of English (listening, speaking, reading, writing). In the early stages of English language acquisition, ELL students are often asked to demonstrate knowledge using new language skills that may not be sufficiently developed to accurately reflect their ability and content knowledge. However, ELL students at beginning levels of English language proficiency (ELP 1/Basic) can be expected to demonstrate knowledge using visuals, graphics or representations that are not primarily dependent on text or explanation in English. ELL students can also be guided to participate in partner or small group interactive classroom tasks appropriate to the level of their English language proficiency.

<b>ELP 1/Basic</b>	<b>ELP 2/Low Intermediate</b>	<b>ELP 3/High Intermediate</b>	<b>ELP 4/Proficient</b>
<i>Specific/Focused</i>	> > > > > > > > > > > > > >		<i>&gt;General/Open-ended</i>
<i>Sensory/Objects/Hands-on</i>	> > > > > > > > > > > > > >		<i>Abstract/Theoretical</i>
<i>Visuals/Graphic Organizers</i>	> > > > > > > > > > > > > >		<i>Reading/Text Dependent</i>
<i>Interactive (classmates; technology)</i>	> > > > > > > > > > > > > >		<i>Independent</i>

### Descriptors of ELL Performance by English Language Proficiency Level

The following chart offers active descriptors of observable performance, so that classroom teachers can begin to assess what their ELL students know and are able to do as learners of grade-level content.

## Performance Descriptors by English Language Proficiency Levels

Basic (B)	Low Intermediate (LI)	High Intermediate (HI)	Proficient (P)
answer yes/no	answer factual questions	analyze	adapt
arrange	arrange information from oral direction	apply oral descriptions	apply technical language
assemble	ask	assess	compose
associate visuals	brainstorm in a group	associate	conclude
build	compare	build hypotheses	connect
categorize	complete graphs and charts	clarify	correlate
chart information	define	compose	create original
check	demonstrate	confirm predictions	critique
choose	describe how to do something	construct	defend
choral read	describe items/objects	debate	depict
classify	discuss in small group	discuss in a large group	detect
collect	distinguish between or among	edit	draw conclusions
color and shade	estimate	elaborate	evaluate
combine	examine	engage	evaluate impact
compare	find examples	express personal preferences	explain
connect visuals w/ words	follow multi-step directions/procedures	give rationale	find patterns
construct models	generalize	identify main idea	form main idea from details
copy	generate	initiate conversation	give reviews
count/enumerate	give characteristics	match cause and effect	hypothesize
design	give details	paraphrase	imagine
distinguish	give outcomes of events	participate in class discussion	infer
draw	highlight important information	predict next in sequence	initiate
enumerate	identify data from oral directions	present visually supported information	integrate information
explore	identify timelines	prioritize	interpret
find	imagine	propose	justify
follow oral directions	interview	provide details	make supporting arguments
give an example	log	publish	narrate
identify	offer information	question	offer information
illustrate	organize from listening	recommend	organize group activity
imitate	outline or complete graphic organizer	reflect	paraphrase
label	plan	respond giving opinion	pose solutions
list	predict	retell	predict
listen attentively	produce statements	revise	propose
locate	provide information	rewrite	provide detailed information

### Performance Descriptors by English Language Proficiency Levels (continued)

Basic (B)	Low Intermediate (LI)	High Intermediate (HI)	Proficient (P)
mimic	respond	support an opinion	self assess
name	restate	take notes from lecture with visuals	simulate
observe	role play	use examples	synthesize information
offer information	select		take lecture notes w/o visuals
participate	sequence events		use examples to support
point	share		validate
produce drawings	solve		verify
rank in order	spell		
rate	state differences		
recall	summarize		
recite or mimic	take notes from written information		
recognize	take simple word/phrase dictation		
record/write down	tell		
recreate	translate		
repeat	underline		
reproduce			
review			
search			
select			
separate			
sequence			
show			
sort			
state facts			
take apart			
trace			
use cues			
use graphic organizers			
use models			

APPENDIX A

## Student Descriptions at English Language Proficiency Levels

To meet the instructional needs of English language learners (ELLs) in Michigan, six (6) levels of English language proficiency are used to more accurately describe student proficiency in listening, speaking, reading (& comprehension), and writing skills. Included in the table below is a general description of the characteristics of ELLs at each level of proficiency.

Federal NCLB Categories of English Proficiency	Michigan English Proficiency Levels	Description of English Language Learners (ELLs)
<p><b>BASIC (B)</b></p>	<p><b>Level 1A</b></p>	<p><b><u>Basic-Students with interrupted/limited formal education (SIFE)</u></b>                      Level 1A includes students whose schooling has been interrupted for a variety of reasons, including war, poverty or patterns of migration, as well as students coming from remote rural settings with little prior opportunity for sequential schooling. These students may exhibit some of the following characteristics: pre- or semi-literacy in their native language; minimal understanding of the function of literacy; performance significantly below grade level; lack of awareness of the organization and culture of school. (TESOL, 1997, p.21) Because these students may need more time to acquire academic background knowledge as they adjust to the school and cultural environment, English language development may also take longer than ELL beginning students at Level 1B. Level 1A students lack sufficient English literacy for meaningful participation in testing even at the most minimal level.</p>
	<p><b>Level 1B</b></p>	<p><b><u>Basic- Students with formal schooling</u></b>                      Students initially have limited or no understanding of English. They rarely use English for communication. They respond non-verbally to simple commands, statements and questions. As their oral comprehension increases, they begin to imitate the verbalization of others by using single words or simple phrases, and begin to use English spontaneously.                       At this earliest stage these students start to construct meaning from text with non-print features (e.g., illustrations, graphs, maps, tables). They gradually construct more meaning from the words themselves, but the construction is often incomplete.                       They are able to generate simple written texts that reflect their knowledge level of syntax. These texts may include a significant amount of non-conventional features, invented spelling, some grammatical inaccuracies, pictorial representations, surface features and rhetorical features of the native language (i.e., ways of structuring text from native language and culture) (TESOL, 1999, p.20).</p>
		<p><b><u>Low-Intermediate</u></b>                      Students can comprehend short conversations on simple topics. They rely on familiar structures and</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LOW- INTERMEDIATE (LI)</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 2</b></p>	<p>utterances. They use repetition, gestures, and other non-verbal cues to sustain conversation.</p> <p>When reading, students at this level can understand basic narrative text and authentic materials. They can use contextual and visual cues to derive meaning from texts that contain unfamiliar words, expressions and structures. They can comprehend passages written in basic sentence patterns, but frequently have to guess at the meaning of more complex materials. They begin to make informed guesses about meaning from context. They can begin to identify the main idea and supporting details of passages.</p> <p>Students can write simple notes, make brief journal entries, and write short reports using basic vocabulary, and common language structures. Frequent errors are characteristic at this level especially when student try to express thoughts that require more complex language structures. (State of Virginia, pp. 4-9)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HIGH- INTERMEDIATE (HI)</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 3</b></p>	<p><b><u>High-Intermediate</u></b></p> <p>At this level students can understand standard speech delivered in most settings with some repetition and rewording. They can understand the main ideas and relevant details of extended discussions or presentations. They draw on a wide range of language forms, vocabulary, idioms, and structures. They can comprehend many subtle nuances with repetition and/or rephrasing. Students at this level are beginning to detect affective undertones and they understand inferences in spoken language. They can communicate orally in most settings.</p> <p>Students can comprehend the content of many texts independently. They still require support in understanding texts in the academic content areas. They have a high degree of success with factual information in non-technical prose. They can read many literature selections for pleasure. They can separate main ideas from supporting ones. They can use the context of a passage and prior knowledge to increase their comprehension. They can detect the overall tone and intent of the text.</p> <p>Students can write multi-paragraph compositions, journal entries, personal and business letters, and creative passages. They can present their thoughts in an organized manner that is easily understood by the reader. They show good control of English word structure and of the most frequently used grammar structures, but errors are still present. They can express complex ideas and use a wide range of vocabulary, idioms, and structures, including a wide range of verb tenses. (Virginia, pp. 11-14)</p>

<b>PROFICIENT (P)</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<p><b><u>Proficient</u></b> At this level students' language skills are adequate for most day- to-day communication needs. Occasional structural and lexical errors occur. Students may have difficulty using and understanding idioms, figures of speech and words with multiple meanings. They communicate in English in new or unfamiliar settings, but have occasional difficulty with complex structures and abstract academic concepts.</p> <p>Students at this level may read a wide range of texts with considerable fluency and are able to locate and identify the specific facts within the texts. However, they may not understand texts in which the concepts are presented in a de-contextualized manner, the sentence structure is complex, or the vocabulary is abstract. They can read independently, but may have occasional comprehension problems.</p> <p>They produce written text independently for personal and academic purposes. Structures, vocabulary and overall organization approximate the writing of native speakers of English. However, errors may persist in one or more of these domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). (TESOL, 1999, p. 21)</p>
<b>ADVANCED PROFICIENT (AP)</b>	<b>Level 5*</b>  *Used for assessment reporting purposes only	<p><b><u>Advanced Proficiency</u></b> Students at the advanced proficient level have demonstrated English proficiency as determined by the state assessment instrument (<i>English Language Proficiency Assessment - ELPA</i>).</p> <p>*Note that students may not have demonstrated proficiency on other district-approved measures.</p>
<b>Formerly Limited English Proficient (FLEP)</b>		<p><b><u>Exited and Monitored</u></b> Students at the advanced proficient level have demonstrated English proficiency as determined by the state assessment instrument (<i>English Language Proficiency Assessment - ELPA</i>) as well as by other district-approved measures. Students are expected to be able to participate fully with their peers in grade level content area classes. The academic performance of these students is monitored for two years as required by federal law.</p>

## APPENDIX B

### General Principles of Second Language Acquisition

Current linguistic, psychological and educational research offers insight into the process of learning additional languages and the pedagogy that supports second language learning. Language learning takes place in the community and in classrooms. In the school setting several general principles underlie successful language teaching and learning for all students. The TESOL *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* provide an understanding of these principles of language acquisition:

- Language is functional.
  - Developing accurate and fluent, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English is essential for students to function proficiently in social situations as well as learn challenging academic content throughout the curriculum.
- Language processes develop interdependently.
  - The acquisition of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) occurs simultaneously and interdependently as learners use English effectively in a variety of social and academic settings. This means that English Language Learners (ELLs) need to actively participate in an ESL curriculum that provides learning opportunities that are purposefully designed for the acquisition of English skills.
- Language acquisition occurs through meaningful use and interaction.
  - English Language Learners (ELLs) must have multiple authentic opportunities to use language, to interact with others as they study meaningful and intellectually challenging content, and to receive feedback on their language use. Qualified teachers in the area of second language acquisition accelerate the process of language learning. English Language Learners (ELLs) need high quality ESL/bilingual instructional programs that are coherent and purposeful, with instruction provided by teachers professionally prepared to teach English to speakers of other languages as well as other subject area content.
- Language acquisition is a long-term process.
  - Language acquisition occurs over time with learners moving through developmental stages and gradually growing in proficiency. Individual learners, however, move through these stages at variable rates. Rates of acquisition are influenced by multiple factors including an individual's background, first language background, learning style, cognitive style, motivation, and personality. In addition, socio-cultural factors such as the influence of the English or native language community in the learner's life may play a role in acquisition. In many instances, learners learn conversation skills related to social language more quickly than they acquire academic skills. Education programs must recognize the length of time it takes to acquire the English language skills necessary for success in school.
- Language learning is cultural learning.
  - To learn a new language is to learn a new culture. Patterns of language usage vary across cultures and reflect differences in values, norms, and beliefs about social roles and relationships in each culture. General education in U.S. schools often reflects a culture different from that of the ELL. Within a well-designed ESL/bilingual instructional program, ELLs learn to understand cultural differences and expectations for successful participation in the school. For ELLs from diverse cultural backgrounds, the goal is to attain the same high standards as native English-speaking students.
- Native language proficiency contributes to second language acquisition
  - Literacy in the native language correlates positively with literacy in the second language. The level of a student's native language proficiency varies. Some ELLs come to the task of learning English and content through English already literate in their native language. Native language literacy can assist these ELLs to construct meaning from academic materials and experiences in classrooms where English is the medium of instruction. However, other ELLs may have had interrupted schooling or limited literacy development in the native language. These students need instruction focused on sustained literacy development to fully participate in school.

## Michigan English Language Proficiency Standards

### APPENDIX C

Domain	ELP Standard #	English Language Proficiency Standards
Listening	L.1	Follow simple and complex directions
	L.2	Understand spoken English to participate in social contexts
	L.3	Identify main ideas and supporting details from spoken English
	L.4	Identify the meaning of vocabulary in the content areas
	L.5	Identify speaker attitude and point of view
	L.6	Make inferences and predictions
Speaking	S.1	Use spoken language for daily activities within and beyond the school setting
	S.2	Engage in conversations for personal expression and enjoyment
	S.3	Use spoken English and nonverbal communication in socially and culturally appropriate ways
	S.4	Use English to interact in the classroom
	S.5	Provide and obtain information; express and exchange opinions
	S.6	Demonstrate comprehensible pronunciation and intonation for clarity in oral communication
	S.7	Present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners on a variety of topics
	S.8	Use strategies to extend communicative competence
Reading	R.1	Recognize concepts of print literacy
	R.2	Demonstrate phonological awareness and the relationship of listening/speaking to decoding
	R.3	Build vocabulary to develop concepts
	R.4	Understand and use grammatical rules of English to improve comprehension
	R.5	Read and demonstrate comprehension of main ideas and supporting details
	R.6	Apply reading skills in social and academic contexts
	R.7	Read for research purposes
	R.8	Make inferences, predictions, and conclusions from reading
	R.9	Analyze style and form of various genre
	R.10	Identify author's voice, attitude, and point of view
Writing	W.1	Use conventions and formats of written English
	W.2	Use grammatical conventions of English
	W.3	Write using appropriate vocabulary choice and variation
	W.4	Construct sentences and develop paragraphs to organize writing supporting a central idea
	W.5	Use the writing process to produce written products
	W.6	Use various types of writing for specific purposes
	W.7	Use multiple sources to extend writing
	W.8	Use tone and voice to engage specific audiences