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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

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SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Michael P. Flanagan, Chairman 

SUBJECT: Presentation of English Language Development Standards for English Language Learners

In July 2012, the U.S. Department of Education approved Michigan's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request. A requirement of this approved request was for Michigan to adopt a set of English language proficiency (ELP) standards as well as an ELP assessment linked to Michigan's Career and College Ready Standards (CCRS). To meet this requirement, the Bureau of Assessment & Accountability (BAA) and the Office of Field Services (OFS) have been investigating options for new ELP standards and assessment adoption.

Through this investigation, the option to transition to the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Development (ELD) Standards was highlighted. Late last year, a stakeholder group of statewide educators was convened to evaluate WIDA among other options and to make a recommendation. WIDA was unanimously recommended by the advisory committee.

The proposed standards meet all federal and state requirements and link to the CCRS. In order to transition to new standards, appropriate professional development and plans will be made for a smooth implementation.

Information regarding the WIDA, the ELD standards, as well as plans for transition will be presented to the State Board for formal approval at its November 20, 2012 meeting.

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As a requirement of the ESEA Flexibility Request (Principle 1) that was recently approved, Michigan is required to adopt a set of English language development standards that correspond to the Career and College Ready Standards (CCRS) no later than the 2013-14 school year. As was described in Michigan's Flexibility Request, the Bureau of Assessment & Accountability (BAA) and the Office of Field Services (OFS) are pursuing an opportunity to transition from the current English proficiency standards and assessment system to the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Development (ELD) Standards and WIDA ACCESS/ASSETS assessment system.

The K-12 WIDA ELD Standards for English language learners (ELLs) are a set of English language proficiency standards designed to define the necessary linguistic and content area competencies for ELLs. They were initially developed in 2004 by the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium, a not-for-profit linguistic standards and assessment consortium led by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Partners of WIDA include other nationally recognized organizations such as the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and MetriTech. The WIDA ELD Standards have been adopted by 33 states and U.S. territories which includes the District of Columbia and the Northern Mariana Islands.

WIDA's revised 2012 ELD Standards encompass both the social contexts assigned with language acquisition and academic contexts corresponding to school in general as well as being linked to CCRS. Additionally, they offer a clear focus on oral language development, literacy in all content areas, an attention to genre, register, and conventions of language, as well as provide instructional supports. The standards define the necessary linguistic competencies for ELLs to be able to succeed across the following areas:

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

In each of the strands, the WIDA ELD Standards provide focused progressions of expressive and receptive linguistic skills across the four language domains of Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. These progressions extend along a continuum of second language acquisition and are grouped into 6 stages:

Level 1 – Entering
Level 2 – Beginning
Level 3 – Developing
Level 4 – Expanding
Level 5 – Bridging
Level 6 – Reaching

More information on the WIDA ELD standards can be found at <http://www.wida.us>.

Seeking Feedback and Input

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) English Learner Advisory Committee is comprised of a geographical representation of English as a Second Language (ESL) bilingual teachers, administrators, Intermediate School District leaders, and community organization members. During the November 2011 meeting, the Advisory Committee members were presented information on two ELD standards and assessment consortium and were asked to provide a recommendation for choosing one with rationale.

The unanimous recommendation by the committee members was to adopt the WIDA standards and assessment system. Members cited the following rationale for adopting WIDA standards:

1. WIDA has a well-established research agenda;
2. There is a clear focus on oral language development that is a prerequisite to literacy development;
3. WIDA standards incorporate literacy across all content areas;
4. There is a strong alignment between WIDA standards, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and Michigan's CCRS.
5. WIDA standards include the necessary linguistic elements and conventions;
6. WIDA has developed a wealth of instructional and professional development supports;
7. The transition from the current ELPS to WIDA would be seamless and achievable; and
8. The MDE and local school teams will have the opportunity to provide input during future assessment item development and higher level meetings.

Alignment to Michigan's CCRS

Michigan's current English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards and assessments are not linked to the CCRS. However, the WIDA standards were recently successfully aligned. An alignment study conducted by an independent agency, the University of Oklahoma, was completed in the spring of 2011 to determine the level of linkage and correspondence of the WIDA standards to the CCRS. The findings from the study conducted showed substantial linkage between the WIDA ELD standards and the CCRS in ELA and Math. Additionally, strong correspondence was found between the WIDA standards and the CCRS in Speaking and Listening. Moderate correspondence was found in the areas of Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. Based on the outcomes of the study, the WIDA ELD standards were revised to provide even closer alignment to the CCRS.

A copy of the alignment study can be found at:
<http://www.wida.us/get.aspx?id=371>.

In addition to this alignment work, the Office of Field Services has convened a group of K-12 and higher education Michigan ELL and language acquisition specialists to provide expert opinion on the gaps between the Michigan ELP

Standards and the CCRS, analyze differences between the current Michigan ELP Standards and the WIDA Standards, as well as the international TESOL Standards on which Michigan's ELP Standards were based. The purpose of the alignment study is to develop a statewide professional development plan that will better prepare Michigan educators in understanding and teaching the new WIDA and CCRS standards to English learners during the transition period from the current ELP to the future WIDA standards and CCRS. The ultimate outcome of the alignment study and the subsequent comprehensive professional development plan is to accelerate English learners' acquisition of the WIDA and CCRS standards and narrow the linguistic and academic achievement gaps between English learners and their non-English learner counterparts.

Assessment

The adoption of the WIDA ELD Standards will allow BAA to continue moving forward with plans to replace the current Michigan K-12 English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) with WIDA's W-APT (screener) in the fall of 2013 and the WIDA ACCESS (summative) in the Spring of 2014. Through Michigan's current participation in the ASSETS Consortium, a computer-based assessment system being developed by WIDA through EAG funding, the W-APT and ACCESS will be replaced in the Spring of 2015 with the ASSETS assessments.

Ultimately, the goals of the WIDA standards and assessment system coincide with the CCRS and the movement to computer-based assessments by defining the academic linguistic skills across grades and content areas for ELLs so that all students can be career- and college-ready writers, readers, critical thinkers, and communicators.

It is recommended that the State Board of Education approve the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment English Language Development Standards to proceed in compliance with the approved ESEA Flexibility Request.