5.4 The CAN DO Descriptors for WIDA's Levels of English Language Proficiency

For teachers unfamiliar with the ELP standards, the CAN DO Descriptors provide a starting point for working with ELLs and a collaborative tool for planning. As teachers become comfortable with the Descriptors, the standards' matrices can be introduced. The CAN DO Descriptors are also general enough to be appropriate to share with students' family members to help them understand the continuum of English language development.

The CAN DO Descriptors expand the Performance Definitions for the ELP standards by giving suggested indicators (not a definitive set) in each language domain: listening, speaking, reading and writing. More targeted than the Performance Definitions, the Descriptors have greater instructional implications; that is, the information may be used to plan differentiated lessons or unit plans. The Descriptors may also apply to ACCESS for ELLs® scores and may assist teachers and administrators in interpreting the meaning of the score reports. In addition, the Descriptors may help explain the Speaking and Writing Rubrics associated with the ELP test. A distinguishing feature of these Descriptors, although not explicitly mentioned, is the presence of sensory, graphic or interactive support, through ELP level 4, to facilitate ELLs' access to content in order to succeed in school.

The CAN DO Descriptors offer teachers and administrators working with ELLs a range of expectations for student performance within a designated ELP level of the WIDA ELP Standards. The Descriptors are not instructional or assessment strategies, per se. They are exemplars of what ELLs may do to demonstrate comprehension in listening and reading as well as production in speaking and writing within a school setting. Unlike the strands of MPIs, the Descriptors do not scaffold from one ELP level to the next. Rather, each ELP level is to be viewed independently.

Currently, the CAN DO Descriptors are written for the entire preK-12 spectrum. Given that they are generalized across grade spans, it is important to acknowledge the variability of students' cognitive development due to age, grade level spans, diagnosed learning disabilities (if applicable) and their diversity of educational experiences. Due to maturation, expectations of young ELLs differ substantially from those of older students. These differences must be taken into account when using the Descriptors.

Presented as an oral language and literacy matrix, similar to the format of the ELP standards, the Descriptors should facilitate educators' examination of the language domains for the five levels of English language proficiency. ELP level 6, Reaching, is reserved for those students whose oral and written English is comparable to their English-proficient peers. Figure 5M presents the CAN DO Descriptors of English oral language and literacy development across the levels of English language proficiency.

In Figure 5N, the CAN DO Descriptors for English language proficiency have been translated into Spanish. This version may be shared with parents literate in Spanish, perhaps at parent-teacher conferences, or to set goals for an individual student's English language development.

Figure 5M: CAN DO Descriptors for the Levels of English Language Proficiency, PreK-12

For the given level of English language proficiency, **with support**, English language learners can:

	Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Beginning	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging
LISTENING	• Point to stated pictures, words, phrases • Follow one-step oral directions • Match oral statements to objects, figures or illustrations	• Sort pictures, objects according to oral instructions • Follow two-step oral directions • Match information from oral descriptions to objects, illustrations	• Locate, select, order information from oral descriptions • Follow multi-step oral directions • Categorize or sequence oral information using pictures, objects	• Compare and contrast functions, relationships from oral information • Analyze and apply oral information • Identify cause and effect from oral discourse	• Draw conclusions from oral information • Construct models based on oral discourse • Make connections from oral discourse
SPEAKING	• Name objects, people, pictures • Answer WH- (who, what, when, where, which) questions	• Ask WH- questions • Describe pictures, events, objects, people • Restate facts	• Formulate hypotheses, make predictions • Describe processes, procedures • Retell stories or events	• Discuss stories, issues, concepts • Give speeches, oral reports • Offer creative solutions to issues, problems	• Engage in debates • Explain phenomena, give examples and justify responses • Express and defend points of view
READING	• Match icons and symbols to words, phrases or environmental print • Identify concepts about print and text features	• Locate and classify information • Identify facts and explicit messages • Select language patterns associated with facts	• Sequence pictures, events, processes • Identify main ideas • Use context clues to determine meaning of words	• Interpret information or data • Find details that support main ideas • Identify word families, figures of speech	• Conduct research to glean information from multiple sources • Draw conclusions from explicit and implicit text
WRITING	• Label objects, pictures, diagrams • Draw in response to a prompt • Produce icons, symbols, words, phrases to convey messages	• Make lists • Produce drawings, phrases, short sentences, notes • Give information requested from oral or written directions	• Produce bare-bones expository or narrative texts • Compare/ contrast information • Describe events, people, processes, procedures	• Summarize information from graphics or notes • Edit and revise writing • Create original ideas or detailed responses	• Apply information to new contexts • React to multiple genres and discourses • Author multiple forms/ genres of writing

(sidebar text: Level 6 Reaching)

Variability of students' cognitive development due to age, grade level spans, their diversity of educational experiences and diagnosed learning disabilities (if applicable), are to be considered in using this information.

Figure 5N: Descripción de las Habilidades en los Niveles del Lenguaje Académico del Inglés, PreK-12

En cada nivel de capacidad en el lenguaje inglés, **con apoyo**, un estudiante de inglés puede hacer lo siguiente:

	Nivel 1 Entrando	Nivel 2 Empezando	Nivel 3 Desarrollando	Nivel 4 Extendiendo	Nivel 5 Conectando
ESCUCHAR	• Señalar dibujos, palabras o frases indicados • Seguir instrucciones orales de un paso • Emparejar declaraciones orales con objetos, figuras o ilustraciones	• Clasificar dibujos u objetos siguiendo las instrucciones verbales • Seguir instrucciones verbales de dos pasos • Emparejar declaraciones verbales con objetos, figuras o ilustraciones	• Localizar, seleccionar y ordenar información que viene de descripciones orales • Seguir instrucciones verbales de múltiples pasos • Clasificar o secuenciar información oral usando dibujos u objetos	• Comparar y contrastar funciones y relaciones de acuerdo a información oral • Analizar y aplicar información oral • Identificar causa y efecto de discurso oral	• Sacar una conclusión de información oral • Construir modelos basados en discurso oral • Hacer conexiones entre información oral
HABLAR	• Nombrar objetos, personas y dibujos • Contestar preguntas (quién, qué, cuándo, dónde, cuál)	• Preguntar • Describir dibujos, eventos, objetos y personas • Reformular y decir hechos	• Formular hipótesis y hacer predicciones • Describir procesos • Redecir cuentos o eventos	• Discutir cuentos, cuestiones, y conceptos • Hacer presentaciones orales • Ofrecer soluciones creativas a cuestiones o problemas	• Participar en debates • Explicar fenómenos, dar ejemplos y justificar respuestas • Expresar y defender puntos de vista
LEER	• Emparejar símbolos y dibujos con palabras, frases o letra en la escritura en el medioambiente • Identificar conceptos de la organización de letras y elementos de textos	• Localizar y clasificar información • Identificar hechos y mensajes directos • Seleccionar patrones de lenguaje asociados con hechos	• Secuenciar dibujos, eventos y procesos • Identificar ideas principales • Usar pistas del contexto para determinar el significado de palabras	• Interpretar información o datos • Encontrar detalles que apoyan las ideas principales • Identificar figuras retóricas y relaciones entre palabras	• Realizar investigaciones para juntar información de múltiples fuentes • Sacar una conclusión de texto explícito e implícito
ESCRIBIR	• Etiquetar objetos, dibujos, diagramas • Dibujar respuestas a instrucciones • Producir iconos, símbolos, palabras y frases para comunicar un mensaje	• Hacer listas • Producir dibujos, frases, oraciones cortas y apuntes • Dar información pedida de instrucciones orales o escritas	• Producir textos básicos de estilo narrativo o informativo • Comparar y contrastar información • Describir eventos, personas, procesos	• Resumir información de representaciones graficas o apuntes • Corregir y revisar escritura • Crear ideas originales o respuestas detalladas	• Aplicar información a contextos nuevos • Reaccionar a múltiples géneros y discursos • Redactar varias formas/géneros de composiciones

Nivel 6 Alcanzando

El desarrollo cognoscitivo de los estudiantes puede variar según edad, grado, diversidad de las experiencias educacionales, y discapacidades de aprendizaje (si existen). Esto se debe considerar al usar ésta información.

Figure 5A: The Relationship among WIDA's Strands of Model Performance Indicators, ELP Standards, CAN DO Descriptors and Performance Definitions
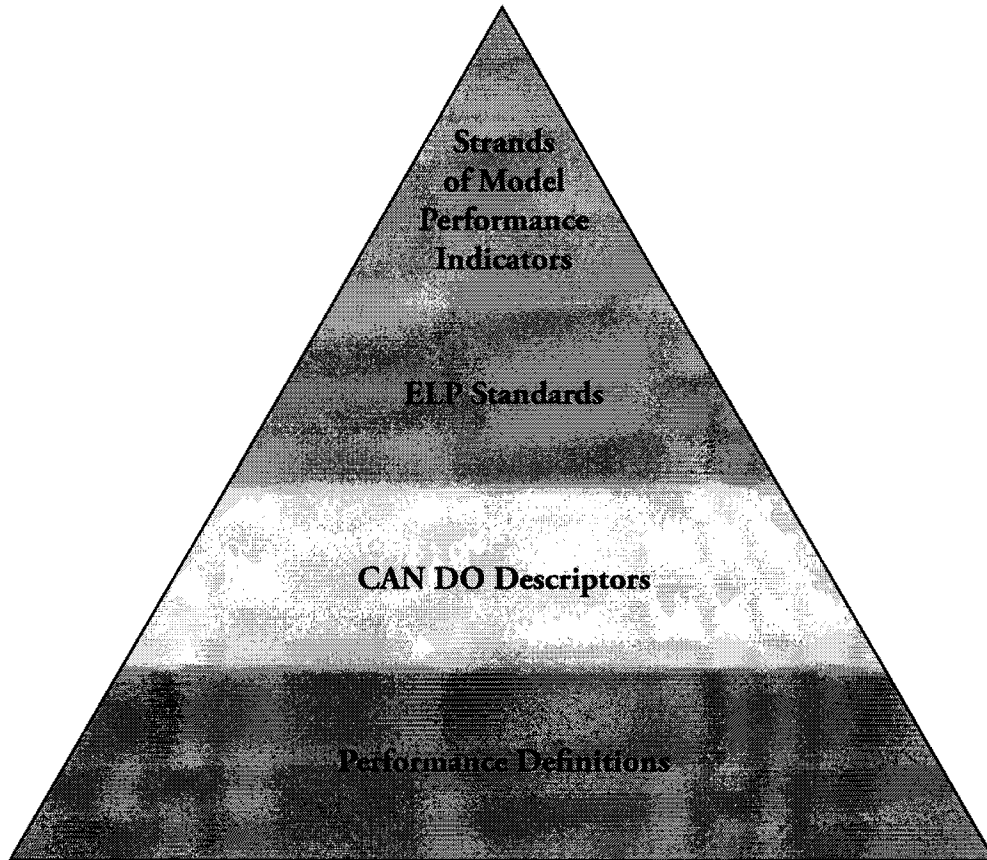
5.2 Performance Definitions for the Levels of English Language Proficiency

The Performance Definitions, presented in Figure 5B and at the start of the standards' matrices, frame the ELP standards. They provide criteria that shape each of the six levels of English language proficiency. The three bullets within each proficiency level in the Performance Definitions also correspond to the categories or components of the Speaking and Writing Rubrics (see section 5.3); namely,

- **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

Figure 5B: Performance Definitions

At the given level of English language proficiency, English language learners will process, understand, produce or use:

Level	Definitions
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 proficient English 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 proficient English 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

<u>Linguistic Complexity</u>

Linguistic complexity refers to the amount of discourse (oral or written), the types and variety of grammatical structures, the organization and cohesion of ideas and, at the higher levels of language proficiency, the use of text structures in specific genres. For example, expository essays often include the use of language to foreshadow, argue and summarize (Schleppegrell, 2004). As ELLs gain proficiency in English, their processing abilities and use of complex structures increase accordingly.

<u>Vocabulary Usage</u>

The role of vocabulary, in particular, the use of academic language associated with content-based instruction, has been documented as critical in the literacy development of second language learners. In fact, "mastery of academic language is arguably the single most important determinant of academic success; to be successful academically, students need to develop the specialized language of academic discourse that is distinct from conversational language" (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, & Rivera, 2006, p.7). In the Performance Definitions, as students progress from the Entering to Reaching levels of proficiency, we witness change in vocabulary use from general language to specific language to specialized or technical language that is required in processing or responding to a task.

Figure 5C gives example sets of general, specific and technical terms associated with ELP standards 2-5 for a given grade level cluster. These examples illustrate ELLs' second language acquisition; they are not to be confused with the three tiers of general vocabulary development described by McKeown, Beck, & Kucan (2002) as high frequency words, rich words and low-frequency words. There are many high-frequency words in English, for example, that have multiple meanings used in a variety of contexts which make them difficult for ELLs.

Figure 5C: Examples of General, Specific and Technical Language across the Grade Level Clusters and ELP Standards

Standard	Sample Grade Level Cluster	General Language	Specific Language	Technical Language
The **language** of Mathematics	1-2	in all	total	sum
The **language** of Language Arts	3-5	person	character	protagonist
The **language** of Science	6-8	knee	kneecap	patella
The **language** of Social Studies	9-12	people	population	demographics

Language Control

Language control reflects the extent to which a communication is comprehensible. Comprehensibility is measured by the number and types of errors committed in oral or written discourse that affect the meaning or intent of the message. These errors involve lapses in fluency, grammatical usage, phonology (the sounds used by a particular language), and semantic choice (the selection of words to convey meaning).

In the examples that follow, we analyze writing samples of students who took the ACCESS for ELLs® Writing Test—referred to here as Emile, Maxine, Tazak and Felipe. Their writing is scrutinized according to each criterion of the Performance Definitions: linguistic complexity, vocabulary usage and language control. In Figures 5E and F, note the drastic advances in all three criteria from level 2 to level 6 in sample student writing from the 3-5 grade level cluster.

STAGES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION SUMMARY

A tool for adapting lesson plans to effectively include the English language learner (ELL)

	Stage 1 Production or Pre-Production Pre-Emergence BICS	Stage 2 Early Production Pre-Emergence BICS	Stage 3 Low Intermediate Speech Emergence BICS/CALP (some)	Stage 4 High Intermediate Intermediate Fluency BICS/CALP (some)	Stage 5 Advanced Advanced Fluency BICS/CALP (some)
Est. timeline	0-6 months in English school	6 months - 1 year in English school	1 - 3 years in English school	3 - 5 years in English school	Up to 9 years in English school
Vocabulary	0-500 receptive word English vocabulary	Up to 1,000 receptive word English vocabulary	Up to 7,000 receptive/active word English vocabulary	Up to 12,000 receptive/active word English vocabulary	12,000 + receptive/active word English vocabulary
Linguistic Attributes and Needs of Students	• Silent Period • Getting ready to produce language • Most time spent listening • Dependent on context • Minimal vocabulary • Understands key words when made comprehensible • Most responses are non-verbal: Gestures, pointing, nodding, drawing	• Comprehension limited to simple sentences • Uses repetitive language patterns • Participates using key words • Uses present tense verbs • Responds with one or two words or familiar, short phrases • Comprehension demonstrated non-verbally	• Comprehension is good • Speaks in short phrases and full simple sentences • Beginning to use dialogue and converse • Grammar mistakes are common • Vocabulary used is limited but growing • Academic vocabulary is starting to emerge • Simple questions can be asked and answered • Can function on a social level	• Uses complex statements • Shares thoughts and opinions • Comprehension is excellent • Asks for clarification • Grammatical errors are in complex context • Participates in conversation • Performs somewhat on an academic level	• Content vocabulary has developed • Participates fully in classroom activities • Occasional extra support needed • Cognitive and academic language skills are advanced • Carries on two-way conversations with comfort • Occasional support needed in complex speech • Uses enriched vocabulary • Continuing to grow
Strategies and Practices	• Use manipulatives, visuals, props • Cooperative learning • Kinesthetic responses • Match print to oral language • Assign buddies • Body language, gestures • Decrease rate of speech • Teach necessary vocabulary	Continue all Stage 1 strategies plus ... • Simplify language • Modify content to allow Stage 2 student to experience success • Encourage student dialogue regarding content • Direct questions that require one or two word responses • Build simple comprehensible content vocabulary	Continue all Stage 1 - 2 strategies plus ... • Use graphic organizers within groups • Write step-by-step instructions • Identify and build on student's background knowledge • Integrate more writing and reading into the curriculum • Allow students to brainstorm • Provide opportunities to describe, retell, compare, contrast, summarize, use charts, diagrams, etc.	Continue all Stage 1 - 3 strategies plus ... • Build both oral and written academic language • Use graphic organizers individually and in groups • Promote expression of explanations • Provide opportunities to make judgements • Ask questions to draw out opinions • Include figurative language in lessons	Continue all Stage 1 - 4 strategies plus ... • Teach note-taking skills • Integrate study skills and test-taking skills • Verify answers independently, both oral and written • Develop broader figurative language including idioms
Blooms Taxonomy	observe, locate, label, match, show, classify, categorize, knowledge, comprehension, application	name, recall, draw, list, record, point, underline, organize, knowledge, comprehension, application	tell, describe, restate, compare, question, map, dramatize, knowledge, comprehension, application, analyze, evaluation, synthesis	imagine, create, appraise, contrast, predict, express, report, estimate, evaluate, explain, knowledge, comprehension, application, analyze, evaluation, synthesis	relate, infer, hypothesize, outline, revise, suppose, verify, rewrite, assess, justify, critique, summarize, illustrate, judge, demonstrate, knowledge, comprehension, application, analyze, evaluation, synthesis