



Nebraska Department of Education English Language Arts & English Language Proficiency Standards Alignment

Introduction

Nebraska adopted new English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards in December 2013. These standards reflect the increased language demands across content areas and are designed to complement and support new college- and career-ready content standards. The 10 standards are the same across all grade clusters (see p.8). The proficiency level descriptors for each grade cluster and standard show the progression of skill attainment. The English Language Arts (ELA) college- and career- ready standards were adopted in Nebraska in September 2014 and revised and updated in 2021. These standards foster deeper thinking, encourage innovation and require students to support thinking with evidence. In the spring of 2017, NDE convened a group of ELL and ELA teachers and administrators to conduct a standards alignment for the two sets of standards. The goals for this alignment work were to meet federal requirements for standards alignment under 1111(b)(F)(iii), create a useful resource for teachers working with English Learners (ELs), and focus on standards that may be more challenging for ELs.

Supporting English Learners in the Content Classroom

In Nebraska, districts implement various types of program models, called language instruction educational programs (LIEPs), to serve English Learners. In fact, many districts have more than one program model within their district. For this reason, ELs with varying levels of English proficiency will be in general education classrooms and will need different types of supports to access grade-level content. The ELP standards describe five levels of proficiency. For the purpose of this alignment, the levels have been collapsed into three levels of proficiency (emerging, progressing, and nearly proficient). This document includes proficiency level descriptions for English Learners and options for supporting students at each level.

English Learners can better access grade-level content when teachers supply classroom supports to their lessons. This document contains general supports by proficiency level that classroom teachers should consider providing to English Learners. They are grouped by ELA domain: comprehension, writing, and reciprocal communication. Depending on the lesson and the skills of the student, some of these supports may be more appropriate than others. In addition, a column has been added for older learners (grades 6-12). While these supports may be appropriate for any English Learner, it is important to recognize that older English learners may need more support because of the increased grade-level skills expected while students are developing English skills. For more lesson-specific supports, see the page referring to the NDE Standards Instructional Tool.

Q&A: Supporting English Learners in the General Classroom

Q: How do I know the proficiency level of an English Learner in my class?

A: It is important to learn the proficiency level of the English Learners (ELs) in your class. The staff in charge of the English Learner program in your district or school can help you obtain this information. Included in this document are descriptions of general profiles that may inform teachers of the productive and receptive skills of students. Please note that levels of proficiency are fluid and at any point a student may demonstrate more or less proficiency in different domains.

Q: How long will English learners be in each level?

A: Students move through proficiency levels at various timelines. Typically, students will be at lower levels of proficiency for a shorter period of time and stay at a progressing level for more time. However, many factors influence student's proficiency levels including, but not limited to: age, prior schooling, initial English proficiency level, etc.

Q: How do I know which supports are appropriate?

A: First, talk with someone in the district on the ELL team who understands language acquisition. They can provide information around supporting students in the classroom. Teachers can use this as a guide for providing supports during their lessons. This document provides general supports that may be appropriate for lessons in comprehension, writing, and reciprocal communication. There are also sample lessons that include more specific supports appropriate for ELs at particular grade bands.

Q: How long should English learners get supports?

A: That depends on the student. Supports are meant to be applied on an individual basis to help students access grade level content and should be gradually removed as students demonstrate grade level knowledge and skills.

Q: What does it mean that an English Learner is proficient?

A: A student is proficient when he or she has attained a level of English language skills necessary to independently produce, interpret, collaborate on, and succeed in grade-level content. That is demonstrated by a score of proficient (a score of all 4's and 5's) on the NE English Language Proficiency Assessment, the ELPA21.

Q: Is it still appropriate to provide supports to English Learners who are proficient?

A: Yes. The lessons here do not include supports for proficient students since they are aligned to the ELP standards. However, proficient students, while no longer receiving supports from the English language program, may still need support in the general education classroom. For example, students may still need support accessing academic vocabulary and content-specific knowledge and skills.

NDE English Language Arts Standards Instructional Tool

The ELA Standards Instructional Tool (SIT) is a repository of teaching strategies aligned to and organized by the Nebraska ELA Standards: Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening, and Multiple Literacies.

The ELA_ELP standards alignment process utilized the ELA SIT as a framework for English learner supports in the ELA classroom. As a result, the group contextualized 8 strategies that include specific supports at three levels of proficiency (emerging, progressing, and nearly proficient) for a particular strategy. These are meant to help ELA teachers implement specific supports for ELs during their lesson. A list and link to the specific SIT tools with EL supports can be found here. For a complete list of all sample SIT tools with EL supports, click [here](#).

Thank you to all who contributed to this important work. The following educators participated in the Nebraska Department of Education's ELA_ELP Standards Alignment work. They helped to contextualize the SIT tool lessons to specific grades as well as inform the work around appropriate supports for each lesson.

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