



Science & English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards Alignment Resource Document

Background

In December 2013, Nebraska adopted new English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards. 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. The proficiency level descriptors for each grade cluster and standard show the progression of skill attainment. In September 2015, Nebraska adopted The Nebraska College and Career Ready Standards for Science. These standards focus on increasing rigor and learning expectations with an emphasis on the skills and knowledge needed for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. In May 2019, NDE convened a group of ELL and Science 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 classroom 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 and supporting students in the classroom, 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 these three levels.

English Learners can better access grade-level content when teachers incorporate classroom supports into their lessons. This document contains general supports by proficiency level that classroom teachers could consider for English Learners. They are grouped by English language proficiency, however, however these supports may be appropriate for all English learners. Depending on the lesson and the skills and background of the student, some of these supports may be more appropriate than others.

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: 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 (speaking and writing) and receptive (listening and reading) skills of students. Please note that levels of proficiency are fluid and at any point a student may demonstrate more or less proficiency in the 4 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. Getting to know a student's background information can help determine the supports they need as well as whether or not there are progressing appropriately in English.

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 and can provide information around supporting students in the classroom. Teachers can use this document as a guide for providing supports during their lessons for students at different levels of English proficiency. There are also sample activities that include more specific supports appropriate for ELs.

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 a student 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.

Contributions

Thank you to all who contributed to this important work. The following educators participated in the Nebraska Department of Education's Science ELP Standards Alignment work.

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