SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Multilingual Learner Considerations for

Considerations for Students Identified as Multilingual Learners

Multilingual Learners (MLs) must be able to fully and effectively participate in all educational and special programs offered within a school district. To ensure this, schools and districts should reference and apply the guidance outlined in the Multilingual Learner Program Guiding Principles. These principles support the integration of language development and other necessary services into daily classroom instruction, ensuring alignment with both state and federal policy requirements.

Language acquisition is a complex, non-linear process. For MLs, developing proficiency in academic English typically takes five to seven years, though this timeline can vary widely. Factors such as a student's age, previous educational background, literacy in their first language, access to high-quality instruction, and the level of support at school and home all play a critical role in shaping their language development journey.

Individualized Language Acquisition Plan (ILAP)

The Individualized Language Acquisition Plan (ILAP) is a legally binding document, equal in importance to an IEP or 504 Plan, and ensures meaningful, equitable access to the curriculum for MLs, as required by Lau v. Nichols (1974) and the Equal Educational Opportunity Act (1974). ILAPs deliver important data and insights essential for effectively supporting MLs. They encompass the latest English language proficiency (ELP) data, evidence-based instructional strategies, and mandated accommodations, fostering both academic achievement and linguistic growth.

MLs with English proficiency levels 1.0–6.0, AL1–AL5, or ALS, whether served or waived, must have an ILAP on file, reviewed and signed by all teachers serving them. If no accommodations are needed, documentation must still acknowledge ML status.

The plan is developed collaboratively by the multilingual learner program team (MLPT), which includes the multilingual learner program specialist/teacher (MLPS), general education teachers, parents/guardians, administrators, counselors, and the student. Accommodations must be agreed upon by the MLPT and are legally required to be implemented by all educators involved.

Assessment accommodations must align with district/state guidelines and are allowable only if supported by the Test Administrator Manual (TAM) or vendor policy.

MLs in monitoring status (M1–M4) after reaching proficiency may receive instructional support, but not state assessment accommodations, per ESEA Section 3113(b)(2). ILAPs should reflect this.

WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition

The SC State Board of Education adopted the 2020 Edition of the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards Framework on May 11, 2021, with full implementation beginning in the 2022–23 school year. The updated framework retains core elements such as the Can Do Philosophy, ELD standard statements, six proficiency levels, and grade-level clusters, while introducing a new organizational structure and expanded resources.

The standards aim to promote high-quality instruction for MLs by setting high, visible expectations for academic language development and honoring students' linguistic backgrounds. They emphasize content-driven language learning and support instruction that is systematic, explicit, and sustained.

The framework includes four key components:

- WIDA ELD Standard Statements
- Key Language Uses (KLUs)
- Language Expectations
- Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs)

These components provide a comprehensive structure to guide educators in integrating language development with academic content, enhancing instruction aligned with current educational policy and practice.

The WIDA ELD Standard Statements are:

1. MLs communicate for Social and Instructional purposes within the school setting,
2. MLs communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Language Arts,
3. MLs communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Mathematics,
4. MLs communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Science, and
5. MLs communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Social Studies.

Key Language Uses (KLUs) - Narrate, Inform, Explain, and Argue - highlight common genres across content areas, helping educators align and prioritize content and language objectives. The 2020 WIDA Standards build from broad standard statements to grade band-specific language expectations aligned with content standards.

Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs) describe student language performance across six levels of English proficiency, with each level building on the previous. These descriptors align with the six grade-level clusters used in the annual ELP assessment, WIDA ACCESS.

WIDA provides grade-appropriate materials consistent with the clusters used in WIDA ACCESS.

South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards - Multilingual Learner Instructional Supports

To support effective instructional planning for MLs, crosswalks are under development that align with the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards (SCCCRS). These crosswalks highlight the intersections between content-area expectations and the language demands embedded within each discipline.

By aligning academic content standards with language development goals, the crosswalks help teachers intentionally integrate language supports into daily instruction. This alignment ensures that MLs are not only accessing rigorous content but also developing the academic language skills necessary for success across subjects. The crosswalks identify key concepts, vocabulary, and language functions, such as explaining, analyzing, and justifying, that are essential for mastery in each content area, while also supporting differentiated instruction based on students' language proficiency levels.

Ultimately, these crosswalks help educators design lessons that are both standards-aligned and linguistically responsive, to help all students meet college- and career-readiness benchmarks. They reinforce the importance of content and language integration as outlined in the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, fostering meaningful access and engagement for MLs across the curriculum.

- Crosswalk for the 2024 SC CCR ELA Standards and WIDA ELD Standards 2020 for Language Arts
- Mathematics Standards Crosswalk from Mathematics Standards and WIDA ELD Standards 2020 for Mathematics
- Social Studies Standards Crosswalk (Coming Fall 2027)
- Science Standards Crosswalk (TBD)
- Crosswalk for the 2026 SC CCR VPAPS and 2020 WIDA ELD Standards Framework

WIDA Can Do Descriptors, News, and Self-Paced eWorkshops

WIDA has several valuable resources designed to support educators in effectively serving MLs. The WIDA Can Do Descriptors offer insight into what students can do at various levels of English language proficiency, providing a strengths-based tool to guide instruction and assessment. Grounded in WIDA's Can Do Philosophy, these descriptors highlight students' strengths and potential, offering guidance on how to differentiate instruction and set realistic, asset-based learning goals. In addition, the WIDA News keeps educators informed with timely updates, professional learning opportunities, and best practices from the field. Educators can also take advantage of self-paced eWorkshops, which offer flexible, online

training modules, high-quality professional development focused on language development, formative assessment, and best instructional practices designed to support both classroom teachers and program coordinators in building their capacity to serve MLs effectively. Together, these resources empower educators to create supportive, language-rich learning environments where MLs can thrive. Below are additional recommended resources that further support instructional practices for MLs:

- Reading with Multilingual Learners
- Teaching Multilingual Learners Social Studies through Multiple Perspectives
- Strategies for Working with Multilingual Learners with Disabilities
- Choose Play for Multilingual Children: Bring Joyful Learning into Your PreK-3 Classroom
- WIDA Standards in Action
- Supporting Multilingual Learners with Disabilities

Multilingual Learner Instructional Supports

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) offers comprehensive instructional support for educators working with MLs through its Multilingual Learner Program (MLP). These resources aim to enhance the educational experience of MLs, ensuring equitable access to the curriculum and fostering academic success.

Key instructional supports:

- Multilingual Learner Program Guiding Principles
    - Examples of Instructional Accommodations and Modifications
    - Multilingual Learner Program Service Delivery Models (PSDM) Matrix
    - Individualized Language Acquisition Plan (ILAP)
- Best Practices Handbook
- Accommodations Handbook
- WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition

For questions, please contact the Title III/MLP team at TitleIIIMLP@ed.sc.gov.