

ELL Expectations and Teaching Suggestions by English Proficiency Level

Level One Students (ENTERING):

- Have a few isolated English words and expressions
- Produce words, phrases, or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, wh-questions, or statements with visual and graphic support
- Are in a silent period of infrequent verbal communication, during which they are working to make sense of a new language, culture, and educational setting.
- Benefit from an accepting and encouraging environment
- Benefit from one or two same-sex buddies who can show them how to adjust to the new school environment
- Benefits from the use of visuals, pantomime, and hands-on activities, which will provide them ways to be active participants in class activities
- Benefit from support in the home language.

Level Two Students (BEGINNING):

- Function in conversational and academic English with hesitancy and difficulty
- Understand only parts of lessons and simple directions
- Produce phrases or short sentences
- Have pre-emergent or emergent skills in reading and writing English
- Are significantly below grade level in ability to function in English
- Understand only some spoken English that deals with subjects they are already familiar with
- May become frustrated with their own rate of English language acquisition and may appear to be uncooperative
- Benefit from an accepting and encouraging environment
- Benefit from much visual support in instruction (think stick figures)
- Benefit from teachers who model and encourage correct usage in a positive way
- Benefit from teachers who avoid the use of idiomatic language
- Benefit from support in their home language

Level Three Students (DEVELOPING):

- Speak and understand “hallway” and academic English with decreasing hesitancy and difficulty
- Produce expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs
- Are developing reading and writing skills (which probably lag behind listening and speaking skills)
- Are often thought to have better comprehension than is the case
- May be reluctant to ask the questions they need to ask from a desire to fit in and not appear needy

- Still face a significant challenge when learning academic vocabulary
- Benefit from assistance when demonstrating academic knowledge in content areas
- Benefit from significant support to acquire knowledge in the content areas

Level Four Students (EXPANDING):

- Speak and understand conversational English without apparent difficulty
- Continue to acquire reading and writing skills in content areas
- Still need assistance to achieve grade level expectations in the reading and writing skills in many content areas
- Still have difficulty reading between the lines
- Are challenged by complex sentence structure and specialized vocabulary
- Will often have difficulty with usage variations and idiomatic language
- Benefit from continued support in acquiring the language skills and specialized vocabulary needed to succeed in the content areas
- Benefit from teachers who are sensitive to their desire to avoid the appearance of needing help

Level Five Students (BRIDGING):

- Understand and speak conversational English well
- Are nearly proficient in the reading, writing, speaking, and content area skills needed to achieve grade-level expectations
- Are still refining writing skills and expanding vocabulary
- Still benefit from occasional support

Level Six Students (Formerly ELL):

Formerly LEP (Limited English Proficient)/Now Fully English Proficient

A note about new arrivals: Students who are newly arrived from their home country are not only dealing with a new language and school environment, but they are also coming to terms with the loss of friends, familiar surroundings, and food (think school cafeteria). Often they have left an extended family support network behind. Our climate may be shocking and unbearable. They may be chronically unprepared for the weather and school activities. They can exhibit an initial enthusiasm toward learning English, which might be followed by a period of moodiness, withdrawal, and lack of cooperation. They have realized how difficult it will be to learn English. They may be reluctant to ask questions because it is inappropriate in their home culture. Communication patterns in the home culture between children and adults may lead to behavior considered rude or inappropriate in mainstream US culture. Teachers can focus on modeling the behavior they would like to elicit.