

Limited Formal Schooling (LFS)/ Students with Interrupted Education

(SIFE) are characteristic terms used to describe recent arrivals in the U.S. who have little or no formal schooling and are at least three grade levels behind peers their own age. They exhibit pre- or semi-literacy, will perform significantly below grade level, and lack awareness of the organization and culture of school.

The link below to the National Clearinghouse on English Language Acquisition (NCELA) article regarding this characteristic provides more of an in-depth look at the issues and challenges facing these students, as well as describing the Project Accelerated Literacy (PAL) study undertaken from 1997-2000.

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/symposia/reading/literacy9.html>

When students with LFS or with a background of interrupted schooling enter U.S. schools, they may benefit greatly from specialized newcomer programs that target their areas of academic weakness while simultaneously providing support for development of second language acquisition skills. These programs are generally literacy based and may have a thematic approach to content vocabulary and related skills. The concentration is generally focused on intensive development of social and academic language and development of literacy skills.

The following link provides specific suggestions and practices for both elementary and secondary level students with LFS and provides links for additional resources that may be helpful.

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/practice/itc/ifsinfo.html>

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) published a document in 2004 titled, *“Immigrant Students and Secondary School Reform: A Compendium of Best Practices”* which includes a chapter on Immigrant Students with Limited Formal Schooling. The link to the article is below:

http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1b/a4/84.pdf

The WIDA Consortium English Language Proficiency Standards are designed to recognize the proficiency levels of all students of English as a Second Language (ESL) and utilize Performance Definitions and Can Do Descriptor as an explanatory means for understanding the Proficiency Levels.

The Performance Definitions described in conjunction with the WIDA English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards are representative of the tasks students at each Proficiency Level can be expected to perform.

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

6- Reaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

(Source: WIDA Consortium *Understanding the English Language Proficiency Standards: A Resource Guide*, 2007)

Language is a fluid, as opposed to linear, process. Continually improving on the strands and standards implies the cyclical nature of learning. Students may hear a concept and grasp part of it immediately, understand more of it on the second exposure, and exercise some control of it at the third exposure. This kind of curriculum planning acknowledges the actual nature of language acquisition and is essential to the success of the student relative to the content standards.

To accommodate students at the different proficiency levels, the **WIDA Model Performance Indicators** and the **Can Do Descriptors** will provide both ESOL and content teachers with specific examples of tasks and expectations for particular grade levels that are suitable for students at each level proficiency level.

Information regarding the Model Performance Indicators is found beginning on page RG14 and charts of the Can Do Descriptors begin on page RG57 of the Understanding the English Language Proficiency Standards: A Resource Guide, 2007 available from the WIDA Consortium website at http://www.wida.us/standards/Resource_Guide_web.pdf.