



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

New Jersey Department of Education

Higher Education

English Language Learner Resource Guide



*New Jersey students visit college campus*

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This document, created in June 2017 by a focus group composed of faculty from New Jersey universities, assists New Jersey's teacher preparation programs in providing their teaching candidates with the knowledge and skills to work with English Language learners (ELLs). These faculty, who have experience in preparing bilingual/ESL teachers, developed this document to assist their colleagues charged with preparing general education teachers who will ultimately teach students who are English Language Learners (ELLs).

The focus group was convened to provide in-depth knowledge and strategies to enhance the work teacher preparation programs are currently doing to prepare their students for teaching ELLs. Through this guide, future teachers working in New Jersey's schools will have a resource that complements New Jersey's Administrative Code for Bilingual Education to assist them in addressing the needs of their ELLs. This resource will provide:

- General knowledge about language proficiency
- The process for ELLs to acquire English Language Proficiency (ELP)
- Knowledge of policies for the ELP
- Knowledge of assessments to measure ELP
- Knowledge of assessment adaptations for ELLs
- Instructional strategies to support ELLs in their classroom

### What is essential for ALL teachers to know about teaching English language learners (ELLs)?

1. The students' current level of English language proficiency and/or prior knowledge does not mean the student is unable to learn what is being taught in the classroom.
2. Culture plays a pivotal role in the way a student learns. For this reason, an ELL may initially be confused about the differences between what is taught in his/her home country and what is taught in the United States. Additionally, the rules and routines of school in a student's home country could significantly differ from the norms in the United States. For example:
  - School subjects (Ex. Language Arts/Literacy or Mathematics), see page 7 of [FABRIC](#) for some classroom examples; some cultures might use group work as part of classroom instruction and this concept might be different in a student's home country than it is in the United States;
  - Change of classrooms (a student may come from a country where he/she does not change classes or have different teachers; this change could be very confusing and could affect the time it takes a student to adapt to the new environment); or
  - Number of different teachers.

### What do all teachers need to understand about language proficiency?

Language proficiency in English and native language greatly varies among ELLs. Proficiency in another language is a person's ability to communicate a message. It can be measured on a scale. In NJ, we follow:

- WIDA Proficiency [Indicators](#) → Entering, Emerging, Developing, Expanding, Bridging, Reaching

WIDA measures English language proficiency across four domains. The Four Language Domains:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Proficiency may be impacted by various factors, such as the student's educational background or personal characteristics. For instance, students who like to make friends and are talkative and eager to speak may experience faster progress in listening and speaking. Students who are quiet, but have an excellent academic background, may advance at a greater speed in reading, writing, and subjects that require greater cognitive demands.

What should teachers keep in mind about the stages of and acquisition of English?

Second language is acquired in stages of different duration and is a process that often mirrors how children acquire their first language. Lower level proficiency is typically reached faster, while higher level-proficiency takes more time to acquire. The process of acquiring a second language includes six [stages](#):

1. Pre-production – the student is absorbing the language, but is yet unable to speak. Also known as the “silent period.”
2. Early production – the student begins to speak, but with errors.
3. Speech emergent – the student has more speech and the sentences are longer.
4. Beginning fluency – the student's speech is pretty fluent with a few errors.
5. Intermediate fluency – the student's language is fluent but there may be some vocabulary gaps.
6. Advanced fluency – the student is fluent. (Retrieved from [stages of second language acquisition](#) )

Why is knowledge of second language acquisition important for ALL teachers who teach ELLs?

Knowledge of the process of second language acquisition will provide teachers of ELLs with a more accurate expectation about the progress of their students in the classroom.

- It will help teachers differentiate instruction through:
  - Applying teaching strategies that can be adapted based on students' language proficiency;
  - Providing comprehensible input. This is where teachers provide input to students who understand some, but not all, of the language, so that students have a bit of language that is above their understanding.
  - Scaffolding to teach their students through sensory, graphic, and/or interactive supports;

- Recognizing that there is a “silent period” wherein students “take in” the new language before they might speak. This can take six months or more.

Do all teachers need to be aware of anything about state and federal policies that affect ELLs?

Yes, information and discussion of legal mandates and court decisions are extremely important to provide teachers of ELLs with knowledge of sanctioned rights that protect students and families. It also informs how educational programs and instruction for ELLs should be conducted. Teachers should have knowledge of:

- The New Jersey Administrative Code for Bilingual Education, [N.J.A.C. 6A:15](#), which outlines the programmatic requirements for bilingual, ESL, and ELS programs.
- Court decisions that protect the rights of ELLs, such as:
  - [Lau v. Nichols \(1974\)](#) and [Plyler v. Doe \(1982\)](#) for knowledge of the education that should be offered to ELLs to protect their rights related to bilingual education; and
  - [Castañeda v. Pickard \(1981\)](#) for knowledge of curriculum quality and assessments of ELL programs that effectively address the needs of the students.
- Title [VI](#) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974, regarding ELLs’ rights to meaningfully and equally participate in educational programs and services.
- [Office of Civil Rights and Department of Justice Dear Colleagues Letter](#) of January 2015 provides information outlining how districts must take steps to ensure participation and access to programs for ELLs.
- [The Every Student Succeeds Act](#) contains information about instructional programs and assessment of ELLs.
- Education of Individuals With Disabilities ([IDEA](#))

What are the assessment implications (language and content) that all teachers need to know about ELLs?

Teachers of ELLs should know how to differentiate assessments based on language proficiency. [Assessments](#) can be modified by providing word banks, providing simplified language, adjusting wait time, providing alternate ways of answering questions, and considering cultural differences.

Assessments can be:

Classroom which should be differentiated based on ELLs’ language proficiency levels.

Formative The [WIDA rubrics](#) in listening, speaking, reading, and writing can be used for this purpose.

Language Proficiency The [ACCESS for ELLs](#) is administered annually to measure ELLs’ progress in academic English.

Summative such as statewide assessments allow for [ELL accommodations](#).

What is the requisite knowledge that teachers should possess about language proficiency standards?

Teachers should have a basic knowledge of the [WIDA Performance Definitions](#) and use them in planning lessons and units, teaching, and especially in creating appropriate assessments.

Are there specific considerations for curriculum development?

[Universities](#) may wish to create a one-credit to three-credit course on Teaching English Language Learners for undergraduate and graduate education majors, as well as those pursuing supervisor certification universities and colleges in New Jersey. In fact, all educators and administrators should receive explicit training in order to meet the needs of their ELLs.

[Preparing All Teachers to Meet the Needs of English Language Learners: Applying Research to Policy and Practice for Teacher Effectiveness](#)

What types of instructional strategies do teachers need to teach ELLs?

Some [instructional strategies](#) that teachers can use include:

- Slowing speech and using shorter sentences, present tense of words, synonyms, examples, gestures, and demonstrations;
- Avoiding expressions or sayings that are only common in the United States (e.g. *up in the air*; *hit the books*);
- Using as many mediums as possible to convey information (e.g., oral, written, videos, teacher demonstration, student demonstration);
- Giving students enough time to process the question;
- Using bilingual handouts and cue lists;
- Getting to know your students and their native countries; and
- Using metaphors and imagery for cues.

[English Language Learner Scaffolds for English Language Arts and Math](#) can be used to differentiate content objectives by language proficiency level.

What is important about sheltered instruction?

According to the [Professional Learning Board](#):

“Sheltered Instruction (SI) is a method of teaching English Language Learners that fits the recommended model of culturally responsive education. The goal of SI is to help ELLs develop **content knowledge**, **language proficiency**, and **academic skills** at the same time.”

“[SI](#) provides a framework for combining and organizing best teaching techniques that have been recommended by experts for years. [...] While advantageous for many learners, these

approaches can be very important for teaching ELLs.” The goal of sheltered instruction is to help develop content and linguistic knowledge at the same time. It was designed for teachers of other areas, not only ESL teachers.

Are there any other areas to include or consider?

Teachers can be the best advocates for ELLs, but they must be informed and understand the linguistic and cultural challenges facing these students. Professionals should take courses in ESL and Bilingual Education endorsement programs to become familiar with the challenges facing ELLs.

Collaboration among mainstream and ELL teachers is crucial to build a shared language, discuss classroom practice, design curriculum collaboratively, and to use each other as resources (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010, WIDA Collaboration, 2017). Through collaboration, language and content can be connected so as to result in meaningful instruction for ELLs (WIDA Essential Actions Handbook, 2013).

## Appendix A

### NJ Teacher Education Survey Results

**A survey of New Jersey educators was conducted between January 2017 and March 2017. The survey (below) is a collection of data from ELL educators in New Jersey on their attitudes and beliefs related to ELLs and teacher education programs. It was conducted by Bryan Meadows for NJTESOL/NJBE Voices and is used with permission. Survey analysis can be found in its entirety [here](#).**

The survey asked four questions:

- 1) What would you like to see teacher education programs in New Jersey START doing?
- 2) What would you like to see teacher education programs in New Jersey CONTINUE doing?
- 3) What would you like to see teacher education programs in New Jersey STOP doing?
- 4) What would you like to see teacher education programs IMPROVE ON?

Summaries of each question item are presented below.

First, regarding what programs should start doing, respondents noted things such as:

- hands-on practical classroom experiences;
- lesson planning within realistic parameters;
- practice with ESL testing procedures;
- differentiation techniques at all stages of instruction/assessment;
- strategies for collaborating with mainstream teachers; and
- a stronger sense of ELL educator advocacy.

On this same question, respondents further called for programs to provide candidates with deeper understandings of:

- school law as it pertains to ELLs;
- the intersection of special education with ESL/bilingual services;
- the needs of SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) students, and
- the inter-relationship between NJSL (New Jersey Student Learning Standards) and WIDA.

Moving to the second question, things programs should continue doing, survey participants suggested teacher education programs continue connecting theory to research to practice as well as providing:

- professional mentorship;
- training in multicultural awareness; and
- a space for novice educators to exchange ideas with their peer cohort.

Third, regarding what programs should stop doing, survey respondents noted that theory can be problematic when it is out of date and when it takes up too much of a single course. Also problematic are unrealistic assignments that are distanced from K-12 realities. Participants also called for an end to summer clinical placements.

Fourth, regarding what teacher education programs could improve on, teacher participants gave the following responses:

- a more narrow focus on ELL success in academic mainstream classrooms;
- more guidance in classroom management and lesson/unit pacing;
- opportunities for cross-certificate collaboration among teacher candidates; and
- workshops to prepare junior teachers for the job market.

They also called for improvements in the quality of course instructors and in the excessive number of assignments attached to each course.

The audience receiving the survey results discussed them and provided their personal input in response. One additional item that emerged from the group dialogue was the need for teacher education programs to provide a stronger foundation in American English structure at the sentence level.