

## **Module 1**

# **Understanding English Learners and Second Language Acquisition**

**[TAB PAGE]**



# Module 1: Understanding English Learners and Second Language Acquisition

## Rationale

“English language learners represent a growing proportion of U.S. students. To meet these students’ needs, we must understand who they are.”

-Garcia, H., Jensen, B., and Scribner, K. (2009). The Demographic Imperative.  
*Educational Leadership*, 66(7), p.8.

## Essential Question

What do we need to understand about our English learners in order to better meet their language acquisition needs?

## Agenda

In this module of today’s professional learning, you will:

- Analyze Tennessee English learner data.
- Distinguish characteristics of conversational and academic language development.
- Understand the stages of second language acquisition.
- Apply understanding of module content in real world context.

## Tennessee Succeeds Strategic Plan Goals

### GOAL 1

**Tennessee will rank in the top half of states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) by 2019.**

In 2013, our state posted the largest improvements ever recorded on the NAEP test, also known as the Nation's Report Card. These gains brought the state's ranking from the mid-40s (rankings vary by subject) into the mid-30s. We hope to see the state's ranking continue to increase so that our students' achievement places Tennessee in the top half of states by 2019.

### GOAL 2

**The average ACT composite score in Tennessee will be a 21 by 2020.**

The ACT serves as a gateway to college and career in Tennessee, determining students' eligibility for the HOPE scholarship, requirements for postsecondary remedial or developmental coursework, and sometimes entry-level salary. Between 2011 and 2015, we have seen the average Tennessee ACT score for public students increase from 19.0 to 19.4. By 2020, we will raise this number to 21, signaling that the average student in Tennessee is prepared for postsecondary coursework.

### GOAL 3

**The majority of high school graduates from the class of 2020 will earn a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree.**

Governor Haslam's Tennessee Promise initiative, which makes community and technical college free to all Tennessee high school graduates, signals the commitment across the state to prepare students for a future where most Tennessee jobs require postsecondary success. Yet, we are far from this goal. While almost 60 percent of high school graduates enroll in postsecondary, only 24 percent complete. For the graduating class of 2020, we aim to shift the balance so that the majority of students earn a certificate, diploma, or degree within six years of graduation.

# Tennessee Succeeds Strategic Plan Priority Areas

<b>PRIORITY AREAS</b>
<b>Early Foundations &amp; Literacy</b> Building skills in early grades to contribute to future success
<b>High School &amp; Bridge to Postsecondary</b> Preparing significantly more students for postsecondary completion
<b>All Means All</b> Providing individualized support and opportunities for all students with a focus on those who are furthest behind
<b>Educator Support</b> Supporting the preparation and development of an exceptional educator workforce
<b>District Empowerment</b> Providing districts with the tools and autonomy they need to make the best decisions for students

## Defining EL

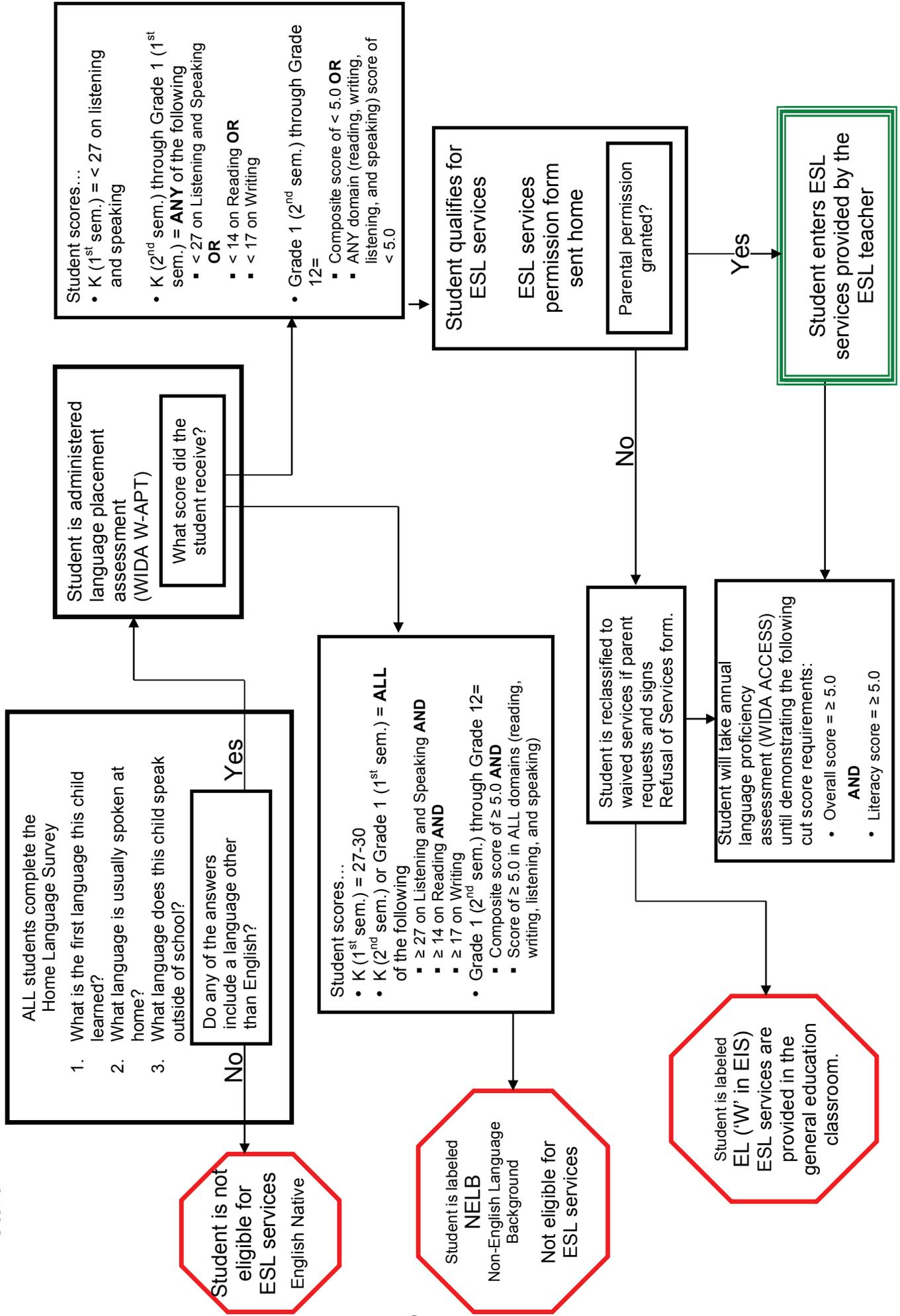
### Who are our EL students?

- EL = English learner
- T1 = Transitional first year
- T2 = Transitional second year
- \*T3/T4 = Transitional third and fourth year
- W = Waived services
- NELB = Non-English language background

\*New in 2016-17

# Identifying EL Students

Start:



# Tennessee EL Data

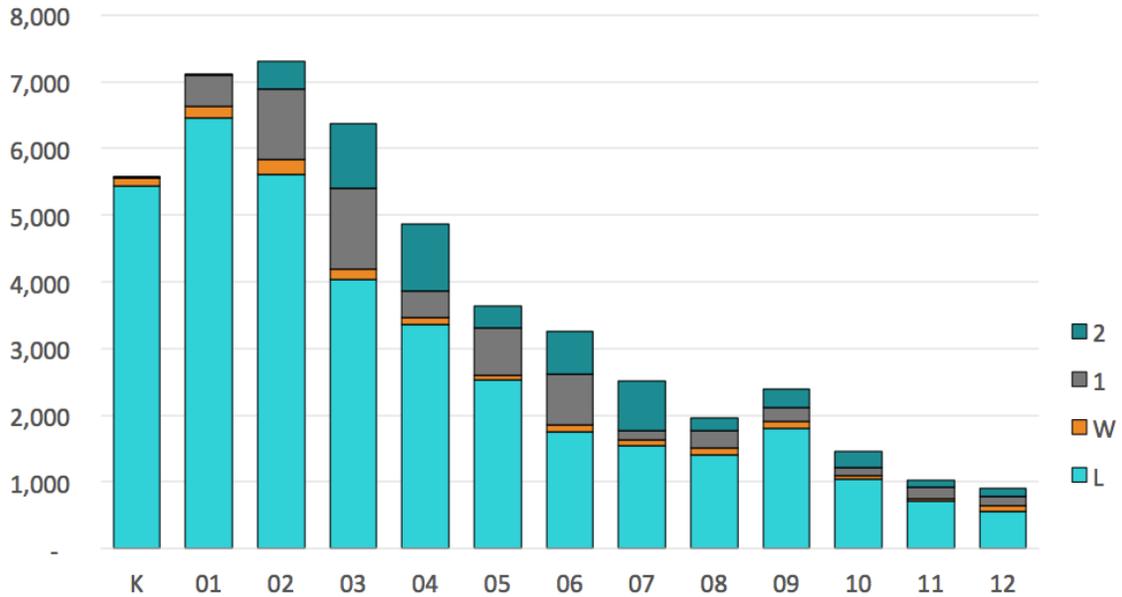
## Say/Mean Data Analysis Activity

Chart	What Does it Say? <small>Provide a piece of information from the chart.</small>	What Does it Mean? <small>What can we infer about this information?</small>
<b>Count of ESL Students by Grade Level</b>		
<b>2015 Average WIDA ACCESS Composite Proficiency Level by Grade</b>		
<b>2015 Average WIDA ACCESS Proficiency Level</b>		
<b>TCAP Performance for EL vs. Non-EL Students</b>		
<b>Achievement Gaps in Grades 3-8 ELA</b>		

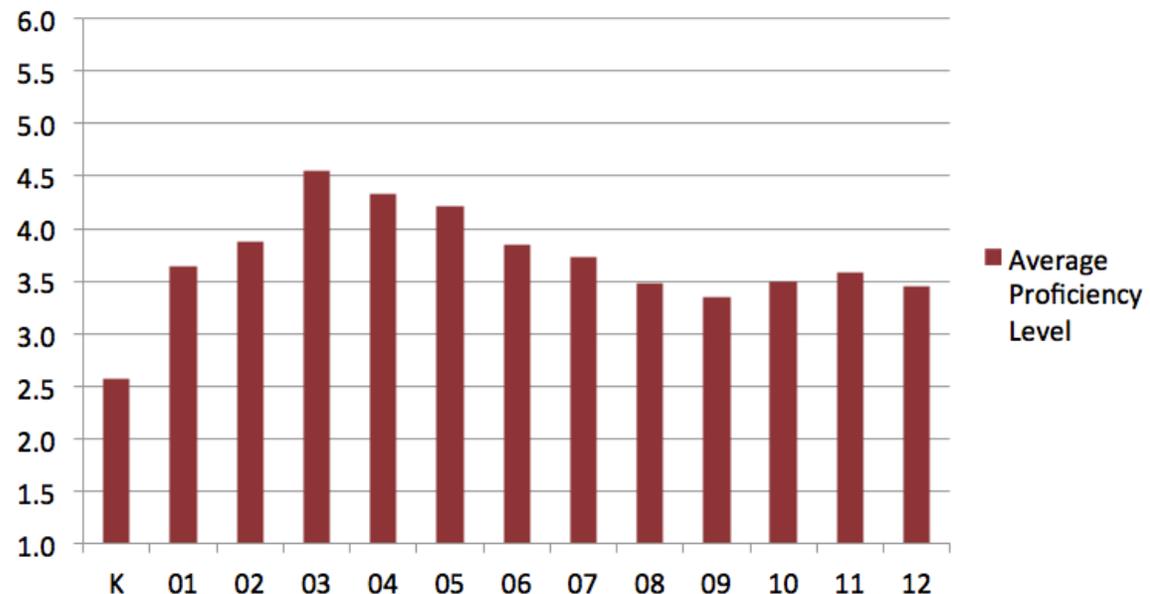
Strategy adapted from *Deeper Reading*. Gallagher, K. (2004).

# Tennessee EL Data

## Count of EL Students by Grade Level



## 2015 Average WIDA ACCESS Composite Proficiency Level by Grade

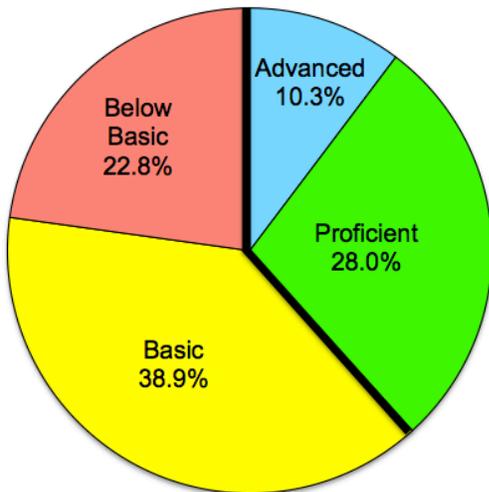


**2015 Average WIDA ACCESS Proficiency Level by Subtest**

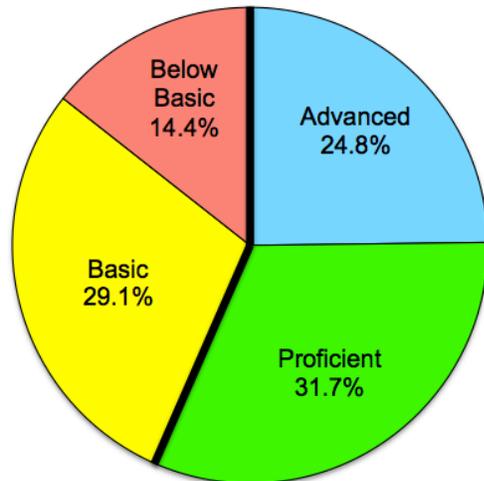
Composite	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
<b>3.7</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.3</b>

**TCAP Math and Reading Language Arts**

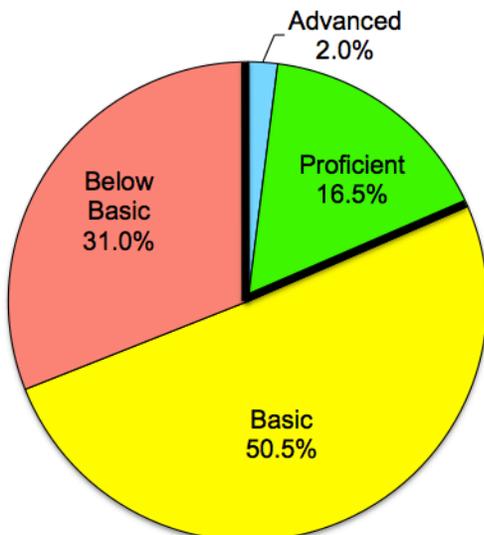
**2015 EL Performance on TCAP Math**



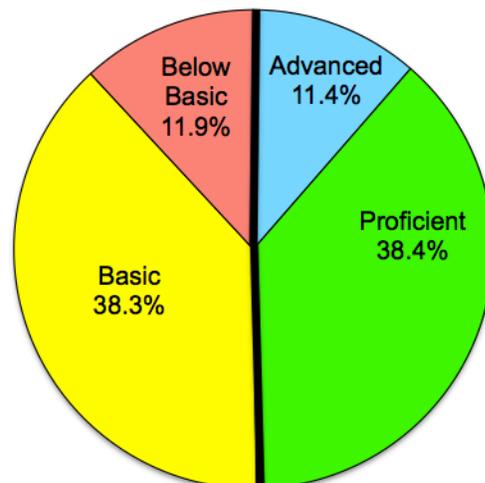
**2015 Non-EL Performance on TCAP Math**

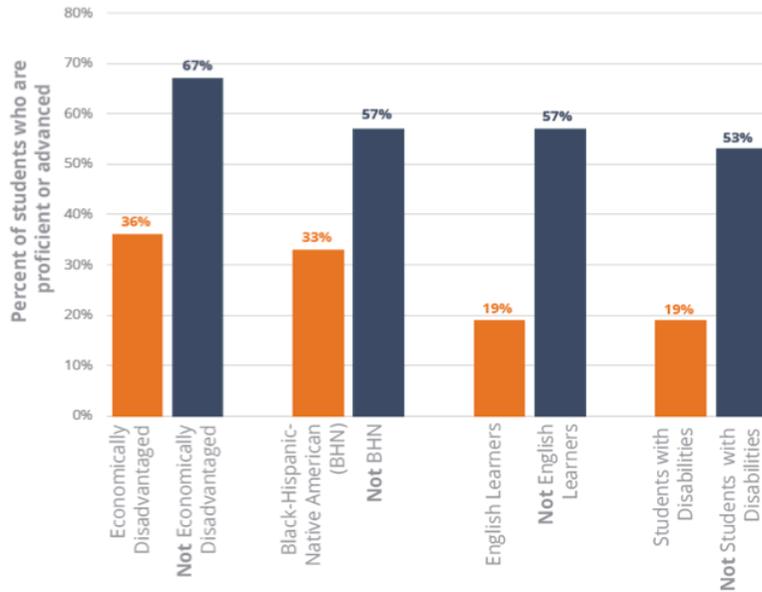


**2015 EL Performance on TCAP Reading Language Arts**



**2015 Non-EL Performance on TCAP Reading Language Arts**





## Tennessee EL Data Reflection

1. What did this activity reveal about EL students in Tennessee?
2. Which data did you find most surprising? Why?
3. How does the data relate to your own experiences with EL students in your school/district?

# BICS and CALP: Second Language Proficiency and Learning Theory

## Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)

The commonly used acronym **BICS** describes social, conversational language used for oral communication. Also described as social language, this type of communication offers many cues to the listener and is context-embedded language. Usually it takes about two years for students from different linguistic backgrounds to comprehend context-embedded social language readily. English language learners can comprehend social language by:

- observing speakers' non-verbal behavior (gestures, facial expressions, and eye actions);
- observing others' reactions;
- using voice cues such as phrasing, intonations, and stress;
- observing pictures, concrete objects, and other contextual cues which are present; and
- asking for statements to be repeated, and/or clarified.

## Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

**CALP** is the context-reduced language of the academic classroom. It takes five to seven years for English language learners to become proficient in the language of the classroom because:

- non-verbal clues are absent;
- there is less face-to-face interaction;
- academic language is often abstract;
- literacy demands are high (narrative and expository text and textbooks are written beyond the language proficiency of the students); and
- cultural/linguistic knowledge is often needed to comprehend fully.

- Adapted from *The Needs of English Language Learners and the Process of Learning a New Language*, Illinois Resource Center. Retrieved from [http://www.sdall.org/attachments/File/COABE\\_2013\\_Resources/Lovrien1.pdf](http://www.sdall.org/attachments/File/COABE_2013_Resources/Lovrien1.pdf)

# Stages of Language Acquisition

## Stage I: Preproduction

Students at this stage tend to be non-verbal. Most of what is spoken in English is completely incomprehensible. Students will exhibit some level of frustration, anxiety, and withdrawal, characterized as “culture shock.” Students will focus intensively on listening and viewing what is happening in the classroom. They will copy from the board and repeat what they hear with little or no comprehension at first. Please note: Students may exhibit inattentiveness at times. However, it should be noted that the language overload of second language learning can be exhausting. Suggestions for the classroom are:

- Use of visuals, real objects, manipulatives.
- Response through physical movement or manipulation of objects.
- Allow students to listen, observe. Do not force students to speak. Provide many listening opportunities.
- Group students with more advanced ELLs or cooperative mainstream peers for group activities.
- Provide reading materials with simplified text and numerous pictures.

## Stage II: Early Production

Students will begin to repeat language commonly used in social conversation and will be able to use routine expressions. They will make statements and ask questions with isolated words or simple phrases. They will decode according to the phonetic rules of first language. Students can identify people, places, and objects and can participate in class activities by relating information to this type of information. Students may continue to exhibit inattentiveness at times, but not to the frequency and intensity noted for students at Stage One. Suggestions for the classroom are:

- Use simplified, abbreviated text materials, focusing on the main idea(s).
- Continue to provide listening activities with visual support.
- Begin writing activities, such as dialogue journals for reflection and response to learning materials.
- Ask yes/no questions, or questions requiring a 1-3 word response.
- Response to assessments can take the form of actions, manipulation of materials, and/or simplified response.
- Introduction of predictable books with limited words, more pictures, and/or graphics for primary age ELLs.
- Introduction of structured retelling activities, with the use of physical responses, visuals, and/or manipulatives for primary age ELLs.

### **Stage III: Speech Emergence**

Students will exhibit increased proficiency in decoding and comprehending second language words and text. Students will begin, with or without phonics instruction, to decode according to second language rules and from expanded experiences with oral interactions and text. Students will demonstrate an increased understanding of conversations, dialogues, simple stories containing a few details and factual or simple procedural information from content area texts. Teachers will note that written expression will include an expanding vocabulary and the emergence of a writing style. Students can edit writing with guidance (e.g. checklists, peer editors, teacher assistance) and will be able to self-evaluate writing. Suggestions for the classroom are:

- Develop activities with content and context embedded practice in all four-skill areas.
- Ask open-ended questions, but provide models for response orally or through word banks.
- Shared or partnered reading and writing activities.
- Expanded use of predictable books containing more text with primary-age ELLs.
- Use of content area picture books with expanded text (fiction and non-fiction) to support learning of content (e.g. science and social studies).
- Expanded writing opportunities in a variety of genres—descriptive, narrative, instructive, etc.
- Introduce learning strategies instruction examples.

### **Stage IV: Intermediate Fluency**

There is a marked increase in listening, speaking, reading, and writing comprehension and accuracy of response. Students will demonstrate an increased use of strategies for word attack and comprehension of content reading materials. In addition, the student can read and understand a wider variety of genres in literature. He/she can summarize, make simple inferences, and can use language to express and defend opinions. First language background knowledge and strategies become a resource for the student. Overall, the student, at this stage, can perform well in the classroom, but teachers will need to provide structure, strategies, and guidance. Suggestions for the classroom are:

- Provide guided instruction in the use of reference/research materials for middle-high school ELLs.
- Expand learning strategies instruction.
- Provide practice in making inferences from content reading.
- Model appropriate language for expressing abstract concepts from content learning by providing students with response “stems.” (*See examples on the site.*)

- Move toward expanded text reading to include supporting details and extended reading activities.
- Expand writing repertoire to include various types of letters, newspaper journalism, and creative writing experiences.
- Can begin to work in collaborative groups for content activities.

### **Stage V: Advanced Fluency**

At this stage of development, the student performs “almost” like a native speaker. He/she can produce language that is highly accurate, incorporating more complex vocabulary and grammatical structure in his/her communicative discourse. The student’s reading interests broaden and he/she can read independently for information and/or pleasure. His/her writing skills are at a near native English level. The student continues to use his/her native language as a source to enhance comprehension of English. Although most English Language Learners are exited at this level of performance, students may still need a “lifeline” for clarification of new concepts and/or vocabulary. Suggestions for the classroom are:

- Continue to build concepts through advanced content area reading.
- Continue to expand on learning strategies instruction.
- Continue to provide enriched writing activities.
- Help to build an expressive vocabulary to match the strength of the receptive vocabulary development.
- Work in collaborative groups for content activities.

-Adapted from The Needs of English Language Learners and the Process of Learning a New Language, Illinois Resource Center  
Retrieved from [http://www.dupage.k12.il.us/\\_includes/services/doc/2-Needs%20of%20EL%20and%20Developing%20New%20Language.doc](http://www.dupage.k12.il.us/_includes/services/doc/2-Needs%20of%20EL%20and%20Developing%20New%20Language.doc)

## Stages of Language Acquisition Chart

Stage	Characteristics	Approximate Time Frame
<b>Preproduction</b>		0 - 6 months
<b>Early Production</b>		6 months - 1 year
<b>Speech Emergence</b>		1 - 3 years
<b>Intermediate Fluency</b>		3 - 5 years
<b>Advanced Fluency</b>		5 - 7 years

## Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition is a complex process that develops over an extended period of time. It varies with each individual student and is contingent on many factors that can affect the process. Since language depends largely on the context in which it takes place and is acquired in varying degrees of proficiency, it is useful to examine the various factors that affect it as they relate to the individual student's learning and academic growth. Some typical examples of these factors include:

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Anxiety	Students who fear failure and the lack of social acceptance may experience anxiety that interferes with their learning.
Culture	Cultural differences may influence students' behaviors in the classroom. Learning styles may reflect cultural experiences. The role of parents in the educational process may also reflect their cultural backgrounds and may differ from what is expected in American schools.
Family Situation	The home and family environment in which the student lives can greatly affect the student's academic success and educational experience. Students who have left family members behind in their home countries may be unhappy. Students whose families are experiencing financial and/or emotional difficulties may have trouble adjusting to the new learning environment. Students who come from families that stress the importance of education may have well-developed learning skills.
Instruction	Differentiated instructional programs that incorporate a variety of strategies designed to reach individual student's various learning styles and provide a rich language environment offer the best chance of success for English language learners.
Internationally Adopted Children	International adoptees who are not native-English speakers in their country of origin experience some of the same issues as students who are ELLs even though their parents may be competent speakers of English.
Language Loss	Many factors are at play in learning (acquisition) and unlearning (loss) the first and second languages. This can be a simple reversal of learning. The type and speed of attrition depends on the individual and on his or her age and skill level. For the second language, attrition has been affected differently depending on what is the dominant first language environment. (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition)

Life Experiences	The prior knowledge and experience of students help in their development of related language, vocabulary, and concepts. Students from war-torn countries may experience more difficulty developing the trust necessary for developing language-learning skills in a new environment. Students with diverse cultural traditions may be able to strengthen their language learning skills by contrasting their life experiences with their new environments.
Literacy	Literacy in a student's home language facilitates the transfer of skills to a second language; however, a different writing system (alphabet) may cause students difficulty with reading, writing, and spelling in a second language.
Motivation	Students who are successful in the learning environment or those who are encouraged to succeed are usually motivated to learn. All other factors listed here also influence motivation.
Personality	Outgoing students usually take advantage of opportunities to practice their language learning with others.
School-Community	A student whose home language and culture are appreciated and valued will develop a positive self-concept and bring cultural richness to both the school and the community.
Self- Concept	Self-confident students take risks with learning, get more opportunities to build language skills, and are not as easily discouraged by errors.
Silent Period	Listening to and understanding spoken language is the essential ingredient in second language acquisition. For this reason, teachers are urged not to force production, but rather to allow students a "silent period" during which they can acquire some language knowledge by listening and understanding. The silent period may last days, weeks or months.
Teacher	Students will usually thrive with a caring teacher who offers ample opportunities for learning in a stimulating multisensory environment.
Other Students	All students should be encouraged to model effective learning strategies and appropriate classroom behavior for their peers. Language minority students are often influenced by good learning techniques and appropriate behavior demonstrated by their peers. These peers may also serve as constructive role models for good classroom behavior and effective learning methods.

- Adapted from: Handbook for Educators of Students Who Are English Language Learners with Suspected Disabilities [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/esl/resources/handbook\\_educators.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/esl/resources/handbook_educators.pdf)

## Apply Understanding: Student Scenarios

Student	What does the student's "iceberg" look like? At which stage of language acquisition is the student? Why?
<p><b>Rafael</b></p> <p>Born in Tennessee, Rafael speaks a mix of Spanish and English at home and only speaks Spanish at school when he is with his friends outside of class. He can converse quite well in both languages but is making little academic progress. His teacher notes that he often appears bored or inattentive.</p>	
<p><b>Farquar</b></p> <p>Farquar arrived from Syria less than one year ago at age 9. He only has about one year of formal education due to the war and subsequent closing of schools. Since entering school in the U.S., he rarely speaks in the classroom. He enjoys playing with other kids on the playground at recess but hardly converses with the other students.</p>	
<p><b>Sho-Win</b></p> <p>Sho-Win does fairly well academically in her middle school. She reads and writes at grade level in Chinese. In social settings she hangs out mostly with English-native speakers and is mostly understood by them although she sometimes has to repeat things to them.</p>	
<p><b>Rona</b></p> <p>Rona's mother reads to her at home each night in Romanian. At the age of ten she reads above grade level in Romanian and is beginning to read some English books.</p>	
<p><b>Lucia</b></p> <p>Lucia is able to converse with others fluently in both English and Spanish despite moving regularly between Tennessee, Kentucky, and Florida each year. She is experiencing difficulty in all content areas, especially reading.</p>	

