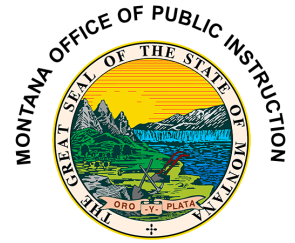


English Language Proficiency Standards: 2025 Implementation Overview Transcript

THE MONTANA OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



Introduction

Hi! My name is Claire Mikeson, and I'm the English Language Arts Instructional Coordinator at OPI. In this video, I'll share updates and resources regarding the 2025 Montana English Language Proficiency K-12 Content Standards that went into effect July 1 of this year.

We'll cover the English Language Proficiency, or ELP, revision process, learn about the ELP standards and performance descriptors, including what they are, why they matter, and how to locate them. We'll also cover how to locate related resources. If you're a teacher who is new to teaching English Learners, the Beginner's Guide to Teaching English Learners can give you a place to start. The guidance document is another helpful resource for educators and administrators that we'll briefly review. Lastly, I'll share some additional resources for professional learning.

Standards Revision Process

The revision of the English Language Proficiency standards began in 2023 with a research and review process, which included findings from The Regional Education Laboratory Northwest, an examination of ELP standards of other states and the 2011 MT ELP content standards, research in language functions and facets of language, and perspectives of Montana's Native American Tribes and language reclamation initiatives. Following that phase, the task force, made up of educators from around the state, revised the standards. Next, the Negotiated Rulemaking Committee convened to further review the standards, then sent them to the Board of Public Education. In 2024, the ELP standards were adopted for implementation in July of 2025.

Glossary

This brief glossary, which you can also find in the ELP guidance documents, contains some key terms you might find in resources regarding English Language Proficiency. You can pause the video now if you'd like to spend more time reviewing them.

Academic English Learners (AELs) - students learning academic English necessary for reading and success in academic disciplines

English Language Learners (ELLs) or English Learners (ELs) - subset of multilingual learners specifically focused on students acquiring English as a second language in school

Multilingual Learners (MLs) - students learning in more than one language, including those developing proficiency in English as an additional language

Integrated Literacy Approach - an approach to education that emphasizes the interconnectedness of reading, writing, speaking, listening, language, and visual representation, encouraging students to apply literacy skills across various contexts

Wrap-around services - services and supports designed for individual students that are comprehensive, team-based and address multifaceted needs

A Message from the ELP Task Force

The task force team created this message in order to contextualize the ELP standards and their significance to MT students:

“Culturally and linguistically diverse students bring unique assets to the educational setting and enrich the experience for all learners. Supporting and affirming students’ cultural identity is essential to social development and academic success.

Montana's Academic English Learners & Multilingual Learners (AELs & MLs), those in need of support to achieve academically, are an extremely diverse group. They include all those whose access to learning is impacted by a language barrier: the speakers of indigenous languages, heritage languages, immigrant languages, or varieties of English. Culturally and linguistically diverse students are federally protected and must be provided equal educational opportunities. However, the following English Language Development (ELD) standards should be considered best practices for developing academic English literacy skills for all students.

Academic language development in the four domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing) is the fundamental vehicle to all Montana’s content standards and the Indian Education For All Essential Understandings. An integrated literacy approach fostering proficiency in social and academic language is foundational to academic success, as well as college and career readiness.

The intention of these ELP standards is to encourage districts and schools to embrace strategies and services that best support their students and community. These standards should be used in conjunction with all grade-level content standards and in accordance with Article X, Section 2 of the Montana Constitution. Wrap-around services and the implementation of a variety of instructional models may be utilized to meet the needs of AELs & MLs and their families.”

Locating the Standards

The ELP standards can be found on the English Language Proficiency webpage for the K-12 Content Standards on OPI. From the website, navigate to Educators, K-12 Content Standards—and here you can see all the other content areas as well—and we’re going to go to English Language Proficiency.

From here, you can find a PDF of the English Language Proficiency content standards and performance descriptors, the ELP Guidance documents, and OPI’s English Language Acquisition webpage. If you navigate to the guidance documents and resources tabs, you’ll find

additional resources linked here as well, like The Beginner's Guide to Teaching English Learners, WIDA frameworks and Can Do Descriptors, {resources} podcast interviews with English Language educators in Montana, and our English Learner Specialist's favorite instructional resource, a website called Colorin Colorado. I'll share more on these resources soon.

The ELP standards, along with all other content standards, can also be found on Satchel, where you can easily navigate standards by grade level and domain accordions. For ELP there are just five standards for K-12.

Administrative Rules of Montana

The ELP standards and performance descriptors can also be found in the Administrative Rules of Montana. Unlike other content standards, the ELP standards are the collective responsibility of all educators, and must be implemented and aligned within all of the content areas.

Section 10.55.806 of ARM addresses our state's requirements for English Learners, which is in turn mandated by federal Title I and Title III requirements for the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA.

The Standards

So what are the standards?

Montana's 2025 ELP K-12 Content Standards were maintained from the 2011 standards with only minor shifts in wording, and are directly based on the 2020 WIDA Framework. Broadly, they cover communication for social and instructional purposes within the content areas.

While not content standards themselves, the ELP Performance Descriptors are a useful accompaniment to the ELP content standards and exist as a resource for educators to help guide instruction and assessment for strengthening students' language skills. These provide more detailed descriptions of language skills that students demonstrate at varying levels of achievement along a spectrum ranging from "Entering" to "Reaching" and are closely aligned to WIDA's Performance Definitions in the areas of Speaking and Writing and Listening and Reading. You can find the performance descriptors linked on both OPI's ELP Content Standards webpage and Satchel and in the ELP Guidance Document.

A Beginner's Guide to Teaching English Learners

Before we review what's in the Guidance Document, let's take a look at A Beginner's Guide to Teaching English Learners. This document features resources compiled by Serena Wright, our English Learner Specialist at OPI, and covers considerations teachers should keep in mind teaching ELs, such as being patient as students deal with culture shock and seeking out mental health resources. The document also has a 10-step checklist to set your students up for success, including both actions you should take and resources you can utilize in order to welcome your students, find translation apps, learn about language acquisition, differentiate your instruction by including specific language learning strategies, and so much more.

If you don't know where to start with integrating English Language Proficiency standards, you're not alone, and this document should be your first stop! You can find this document linked in the slides along with this video, in the guidance document, or on the ELP webpage.

The ELP Guidance Document

In the English Language Proficiency Guidance Document, also located on OPI's ELP webpage, educators can find the revised ELP standards, performance descriptors, and other resources.

Let me walk you through the contents.

The introduction provides an overview of the standards, relevant laws and policies, a guide for navigating this document, a summary of the revision process, and the new coding of the standards and the performance descriptors.

The guidance document of course also includes the standards and performance descriptors themselves, followed by appendices to assist in implementation and instruction.

These address the standards' and performance descriptors' correspondence with previous standards and WIDA frameworks, assessment resources regarding the ACCESS assessment, and program administration resources to assist districts in implementing programs for English Learners.

Additional appendices address IEFA Integration and resources, instructional guidance to help educators select high-quality instructional materials, instructional resources, professional development opportunities, and program delivery standards in the Administrative Rules of Montana.

Additional Resources and Professional Development Opportunities

For this last section of the video, I'll be highlighting a few key resources and professional development opportunities—these, and more, are linked in the Guidance Document, and are a great place to start if you're looking to learn more about English Language Proficiency.

Along with the ELP content standards webpage—where you can find the Beginner's Guide to Teaching English Learners reviewed earlier in this video—OPI also has an English Language Acquisition webpage. This page provides a ton of resources for educators and administrators, such as Title III resources, guides for EL programs, instructional resources, and family and community engagement, among others. The English Language Acquisition site also includes resources for administering the ACCESS Assessment for English Learners.

You can also find a link to join Montana's English Learner Instructional Network (MELIN) to meet monthly with EL educators throughout the school year and stay updated on additional professional learning opportunities.

Montana is a member of the WIDA consortium, and on the WIDA website, you'll find the documents upon which our MT standards were based, including the 2020 English Language Development Standards Framework that shares key language uses; language expectations, functions, and features; annotated language samples, and proficiency level descriptors for individual and grade-level bands. WIDA also shares Performance Definitions for Expressive and Receptive domains, as well as the detailed Can-do Descriptors aligned to specific grade levels.

WIDA offers professional learning on a variety of language learning topics through their self-paced workshops. These are free to Montana educators and can earn you Professional Development Units.

If you're looking for more support for the ACCESS assessment, WIDA also features helpful resources for interpreting the ACCESS Score Reports, including sample score reports, interpretation guides, rubrics connecting ACCESS results to instructional approaches, and additional resources to help educators understand results and communicate their meaning to students' families. All of these resources and more are linked in the ELP Guidance Documents or can be found on the WIDA website.

OPI's Learning Hub is another resource to check out. It currently offers a course called Identifying and Supporting English Language Learners. You can continue to check back for additional courses being created regarding English Language Learning.

Reflection

Thanks for taking the time to learn more about Montana's 2025 English Language Content Standards.

We hope this video has given you information to plan your next steps in strengthening support for Montana's EL students. After learning more about these standards and resources, hit pause, and take a minute to think about three steps your school or district can take now to begin implementation. Don't forget to refer to the Beginner's Guide as you're making a game plan.

Closing

You can find more information and resources on the guidance document on OPI's English Language Proficiency Web page and access links from this slide deck in the description.

For questions or additional information, feel free to reach out to a content specialist at OPI, such as myself, or our Title III and English Learner specialist, Serena Wright.