

New Nomenclature and Standards for ESL Proficiency Levels

As you know, there are many different names for the five proficiency levels. Sometimes, it seems as if there are as many different nomenclatures, all describing the same five proficiency levels, as there are districts and intermediate units. However, the Pennsylvania Department of Education wants to see the nomenclature standardized across the state, but it is not as easy as just picking five appropriate-sounding terms! Pennsylvania will be one of the few states that will be ahead of the curve in terms of the new nomenclature and new standards.

Pennsylvania is developing ESL standards and ESL nomenclature to coincide exactly with TESOL and WIDA. As you may know, TESOL stands for Teachers of Students of Other Languages, and TESOL is changing its previous nomenclature and standards to accommodate for major changes in the landscape of teaching language minority students. WIDA stands for Wisconsin, Idaho, Delaware, Alabama, and a number of other states that have formed a

consortium to develop new nomenclature and new ESL standards. TESOL and WIDA, therefore, have agreed on new nomenclature and new standards acceptable to TESOL and the states involved.

If these changes seem to be major, they are! In order to keep in step and actually ahead (since new nomenclature and standards have not yet been released), Pennsylvania is revamping its ESL nomenclature and standards to match what TESOL and WIDA have agreed upon. It is expected that the new nomenclature and standards will be released a few months from now in Pennsylvania.

There will be new ESL standards for reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as well as ESL reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards for science, math, and social studies to help content area teachers apply the ESL standards to a particular content area. Two new features of the standards are that the standards will be streamlined and more user-friendly.

The new nomenclature will be as follows (from lowest to highest proficiency level): entering, beginning, developing, expanding, and bridging. A student at the bridging level is not considered to be proficient; the student is considered to be close to proficiency, but not quite there. This is a departure from the old system that included proficient as the final level, which was confusing to many.

TESOL, WIDA, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education believe that the new standards and nomenclature should be viable for at least the next 10 years, because they want to build stability into the system. IU8 has been involved in this decision-making process and is proud to be on the cutting edge of changes in ESL.



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Culturally Enlightened Instruction

Friday, October 1, 2004

Mount Aloysius College, Cresson, PA

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Registration at 8:30 a.m.

5 Act 48 Hours

No Registration Fee!

A one-day workshop for district ESL teachers, district ESL coordinators, and administrative personnel

Featured speakers:

- Kathy Mellor, the 2004 National Teacher of the Year, is an ESL teacher at Davis Middle School in North Kingston, Rhode Island.
- Dr. Udaya Shree Nune, a Conemaugh Memorial Hospital Affiliated physician, practices family medicine. While practicing in India and the Middle East, she observed their educational systems.
- Leonard Shurin, IU8 Curriculum and Staff Developer, will have newly updated information on the latest developments in the ESL curriculum.

Please send your registration form to: Lou Girard, Appalachia Intermediate Unit 8, 4500 6th Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602 or fax to: (814) 949-0984.

If you have any questions, please call Lou at (814) 940-0223, ext. 340.

Feature Teacher Spotlight

Kerri Sassano is an ESL instructor for the Altoona Area School District. She started in education by earning her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in communication disorders (speech/language pathology) from Penn State, and then started her teaching career as a full-time substitute Speech/Language Pathologist with the Altoona Area School District during the 2001-2002 school year. The next year, she became the district's first ESL teacher.

The ESL program at Altoona Area is a pull-out program where the ELLs come directly to Kerri for English instruction. Her background in speech pathology has proved to be an asset to ESL instruction. She values the rapport she has with her students and their comfort level. The students feel comfortable enough to discuss problems and questions about everyday teenage life with Kerri.

The Altoona Area School District administration is very supportive of Kerri's efforts, especially Dr. Mary Lou Ray, Chapter I Reading Supervisor. She is thankful for their support and for the satisfaction she gets from working with ELL students.

