

Student Descriptions at English Language Proficiency Levels

To meet the instructional needs of English language learners in Michigan, six (6) levels of English language proficiency are used to describe student proficiency in listening, speaking, reading (& comprehension), and writing skills. Included in the table below is a general description of the characteristics of English language learners at each level of proficiency.

Federal NCLB Categories of English Proficiency	Michigan English Proficiency Levels	Description of English Language Learners (ELLs)
<p>BASIC</p>	<p>Level 1A</p>	<p>Students with limited formal schooling Level 1A includes students whose schooling has been interrupted for a variety of reasons, including war, poverty or patterns of migration, as well as students coming from remote rural settings with little prior opportunity for sequential schooling. These students may exhibit some of the following characteristics: pre- or semi-literacy in their native language; minimal understanding of the function of literacy; performance significantly below grade level; lack of awareness of the organization and culture of school. (TESOL, 1997, p.21) Because these students may need more time to acquire academic background knowledge as they adjust to the school and cultural environment, English language development may also take longer than ELL beginning students at Level 1B. Level 1A students lack sufficient English literacy for meaningful participation in testing even at the most minimal level. Recently arrived student (less than 30 days) These students have not been assessed with the Michigan English Language Proficiency Test or other tests used for placement.</p>
<p>BASIC</p>	<p>Level 1B</p>	<p>Beginning (Pre-production and early production) Students initially have limited or no understanding of English. They rarely use English for communication. They respond non-verbally to simple commands, statements and questions. As their oral comprehension increases, they begin to imitate the verbalization of others by using single words or simple phrases, and begin to use English spontaneously. At this earliest stage these students start to construct meaning from text with non-print features (e.g., illustrations, graphs, maps, tables). They gradually construct more meaning from the words themselves, but the construction is often incomplete. They are able to generate simple written texts that reflect their knowledge level of syntax. These texts may include a significant amount of non-conventional features, invented spelling, some grammatical inaccuracies, pictorial representations, surface features and rhetorical features of the native language (i.e., ways of structuring text from native language and culture) (TESOL, 1999, p.20).</p>

INTERMEDIATE	Level 2	<p>Early intermediate (Speech emergent) Students can comprehend short conversations on simple topics. They rely on familiar structures and utterances. They use repetition, gestures, and other non-verbal cues to sustain conversation.</p> <p>When reading, students at this level can understand basic narrative text and authentic materials. They can use contextual and visual cues to derive meaning from texts that contain unfamiliar words, expressions and structures. They can comprehend passages written in basic sentence patterns, but frequently have to guess at the meaning of more complex materials. They begin to make informed guesses about meaning from context. They can begin to identify the main idea and supporting details of passages.</p> <p>Students can write simple notes, make brief journal entries, and write short reports using basic vocabulary, and common language structures. Frequent errors are characteristic at this level especially when student try to express thoughts that require more complex language structures. (State of Virginia, pp. 4-9)</p>
INTERMEDIATE	Level 3	<p>Intermediate At this level students can understand standard speech delivered in most settings with some repetition and rewording. They can understand the main ideas and relevant details of extended discussions or presentations. They draw on a wide range of language forms, vocabulary, idioms, and structures. They can comprehend many subtle nuances with repetition and/or rephrasing. Students at this level are beginning to detect affective undertones and they understand inferences in spoken language. They can communicate orally in most settings.</p> <p>Students can comprehend the content of many texts independently. They still require support in understanding texts in the academic content areas. They have a high degree of success with factual information in non-technical prose. They can read many literature selections for pleasure. They can separate main ideas from supporting ones. They can use the context of a passage and prior knowledge to increase their comprehension. They can detect the overall tone and intent of the text.</p> <p>Students can write multi-paragraph compositions, journal entries, personal and business letters, and creative passages. They can present their thoughts in an organized manner that is easily understood by the reader. They show good control of English word structure and of the most frequently used grammar structures, but errors are still present. They can express complex ideas and use a wide range of vocabulary, idioms, and structures, including a wide range of verb tenses. (Virginia, pp. 11-14)</p>

INTERMEDIATE	Level 4	<p>Transitional Intermediate At this level students' language skills are adequate for most day-to-day communication needs. Occasional structural and lexical errors occur. Students may have difficulty using and understanding idioms, figures of speech and words with multiple meanings. They communicate in English in new or unfamiliar settings, but have occasional difficulty with complex structures and abstract academic concepts.</p> <p>Students at this level may read a wide range of texts with considerable fluency and are able to locate and identify the specific facts within the texts. However, they may not understand texts in which the concepts are presented in a de-contextualized manner, the sentence structure is complex, or the vocabulary is abstract. They can read independently, but may have occasional comprehension problems.</p> <p>They produce written text independently for personal and academic purposes. Structures, vocabulary and overall organization approximate the writing of native speakers of English. However, errors may persist in one or more of these domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). (TESOL, 1999, p. 21)</p>
PROFICIENT	Level 5	<p>Monitored (Advanced Proficiency) Students at this advanced level have demonstrated English proficiency as determined by state assessment instruments (English Language Proficiency Test - ELPT). They are expected to be able to participate fully with their peers in grade level content area classes. The academic performance of these students is monitored for two years as required by federal law.</p>