



The WIDA CAN DO Philosophy

The WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) Consortium has been built by educators who work with English language learners (ELLs) in their classrooms, schools, districts, and states. As a group of dedicated professionals from multiple disciplines (including, but not limited to, curriculum and instruction, language education, evaluation research, applied linguistics, and measurement), our team serves as a conduit for bridging language theory to research and research to practice as informed by assessment. We approach the development and dissemination of our tools and resources as a means for educators to gain a deeper and richer understanding of their own work with ELLs.

WIDA has a CAN DO philosophy, which accentuates the positive qualities and assets of our ELLs. Throughout the process of developing our products and services, WIDA envisions our students as contributors to the changing educational landscape as we serve as advocates on their behalf. In representing its member states, the goal of the Consortium is to promote the accomplishments and potential of ELL students throughout the greater educational community.

Our CAN DO philosophy is visible in our Principles of Language Development. As a cornerstone of our language standards, these principles, supported by a strong literature base, highlight how students develop and use language. We recognize the critical role of academic language as a vehicle for students to access grade-level content, actively engage in learning, and succeed in school and beyond.

Our CAN DO philosophy is visible in the WIDA English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards, PreKindergarten through Grade 12. Since 2004, WIDA has designed standards around the language demands ELLs encounter in classrooms; that is, the language of school. In doing so, we recognize the importance of students' development of social and instructional language. However, to help guide the academic success of ELLs, our efforts have centered on representing the academic language requisite for students to access to grade-level content. The WIDA ELP Standards help

educators set reasonable expectations for students' language development and recognize the growth in their students' academic English language proficiency.

Our CAN DO philosophy is visible in the CAN DO Descriptors. Based on survey research across WIDA states, this resource was originally intended to support teachers' use of ACCESS for ELLs test results to inform their instructional practice and share language expectations with family members. Today, the Descriptors enjoy wide-spread use throughout the school year as language teachers and content teachers co-plan and co-construct lessons and units differentiated according to what ELLs at different proficiency levels CAN DO in each language domain.

Our CAN DO philosophy is visible in all our assessments. We built ACCESS for ELLs, our K-12 annual accountability measure, as a three-tiered test so that students encounter questions targeted at their current range of English language proficiency. Students are thus able to show what they can do now, rather than what they cannot yet do. Every year, we replace approximately one-third of all test items to ascertain an accurate measurement of students' linguistic abilities and ensure that the assessment reflects our most current understanding of how academic language can best be measured in each language domain. Our philosophy carries over to the WIDA MODEL, a screening or benchmark language proficiency measure that provides teachers a tool for making initial placement decisions and data for instructional planning. With the development of our FLARE products and services, Language Learning Targets will serve as the foundation for gaining formative data on our ELLs. Finally, the ONPAR Science and Mathematics assessments will show that even beginning ELLs can express content knowledge in mathematics and science on large-scale tests through innovative item types that significantly reduce the language load and engage students with interactive computer-based response modes.

Our CAN DO philosophy is visible in our professional development. We believe that ELLs are individuals who bring knowledge, skills, and strengths to their education. We also believe that educators possess the key to unleashing their students' potential. Our goal is to provide educators with supports, services, and resources to sustain long-term, ongoing, and onsite professional growth in their journey to educational excellence. For this, we have developed and implemented a variety of opportunities for schools and districts to incorporate into a comprehensive professional development system for their educators, ranging from one-hour webinars to semester-long courses. Through these diverse opportunities, we are able to provide more access to more educators. CLIMBS is a semester long course that brings school teams together to collaborate in the planning, instruction, and assessment of ELLs. Our Certification academies are another way we are trying to build capacity across our Consortium in the dissemination of our

products and services. Currently, through LADDER for ELLs, we are creating another professional development opportunity for educators to build capacity in their schools and districts in the appropriate use of data to inform systemic and systematic decisions in the education of ELLs.

Our CAN DO philosophy is visible in our research. WIDA's ongoing research focuses on five main areas of inquiry: alignment, the relationship between academic language proficiency and academic achievement, classroom implementation of standards, teacher development, and policy guidance. The research team seeks to provide timely, meaningful, and actionable results to stakeholders. Data from our research studies have served to verify the alignment of WIDA's standards and assessments to state content standards, validate the results of WIDA assessments, define academic language development, and determine the time needed to achieve academic language proficiency. The WIDA research team also provides states and districts with technical assistance on accountability, data management, and ACCESS for ELLs score interpretation. This assistance builds local capacity and encourages the development of policies that are in the best interests of ELLs. All our research is aimed at promoting awareness of the unique traits and abilities of ELLs and how educators and policy-makers alike can foster their achievement.

As educational partners, the efforts of all stakeholders, from paraprofessionals to superintendents, make a difference in the education of our ELL students. Together, by focusing on what our ELLs CAN DO, we can send a powerful message that students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and experiential backgrounds enrich our schools and communities.

