

# **WIDA Alternate Can Do Descriptors**

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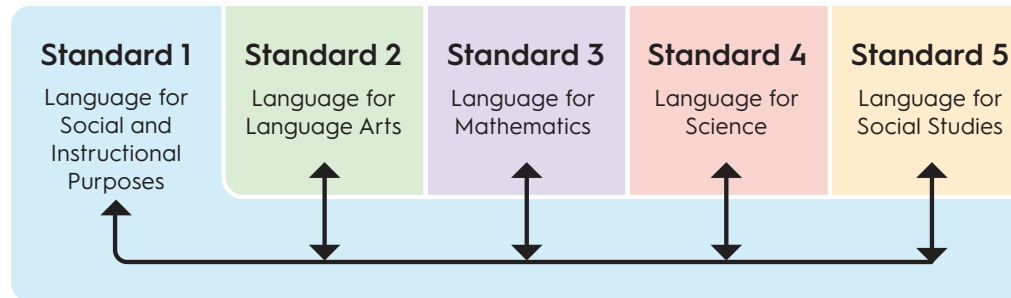
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# Overview

The resources in this document are intended to support classroom instruction. As with all WIDA products and services, they address language proficiency in relation to five English language development (ELD) standard statements. Since 2004, these statements have emphasized the importance of providing multilingual learners with opportunities to understand how language works in the context of content-area instruction. The five ELD standards statements are abbreviated, as shown in Figure 1, to emphasize the use of language for thinking and acting in the ways of knowing prioritized by that content area.

**Figure 1. Conceptual Relationships among the Five WIDA Standards**



Conceptually, as illustrated in Figure 1, WIDA Standard 1 (Language for Social and Instructional Purposes) is designed to integrate with Standards 2–5 (Language for Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies), emphasizing the use of everyday language as a springboard to co-construct meaning making in academic discussions and explorations (Shafer Willner, Kray, & Gottlieb, 2021).

## Comparison Between the Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors and the Alternate Can Do Descriptors

The **Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors (Alt PLDs)** are detailed articulations of the growth in interpretive and expressive language across levels of English proficiency. The **Alternate Can Do Descriptors (Alt Can Dos)** exemplify what multilingual learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities *can do* with communication and language at various stages of English language development in different content areas within the *interpretive* communication modes of listening and reading, and the *expressive* communication modes of speaking and writing. The Alt PLDs and the Alt Can Dos are intended to work together.

Both the Alt PLDs and the Alt Can Dos are resources that align to the [WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition](#). Educators can use these resources to aid in interpreting results from WIDA alternate assessments, enhance their pedagogy to allow for meaningful student participation, and monitor the language and communication progress of multilingual learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Although the Alt PLDs and the Alt Can Dos are separate resources and have unique purposes, they work together to help describe what English language development could look like for multilingual learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The table below compares the two tools.

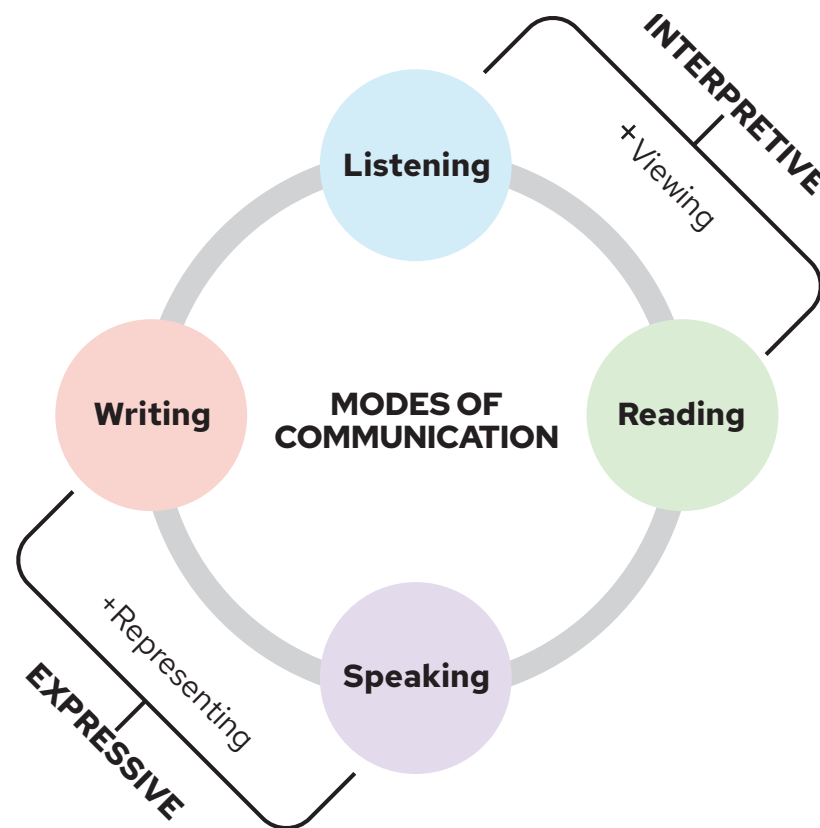
# Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors and Alternate Can Do Descriptors Comparison

	Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors	Alternate Can Do Descriptors
<b>Describes...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth in interpretive and expressive language across levels of English language proficiency development</li> <li>• Progression of linguistic complexity and vocabulary development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of how multilingual learners process and use language for each communication mode, ELD standard and proficiency level by grade cluster</li> <li>• Examples of what multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities <i>can do</i> at varying levels of English language proficiency</li> </ul>
<b>Grade Band</b>	Not grade level or band specific	Grade band specific
<b>Academic Content</b>	Content-area agnostic	Organized by five WIDA Standards: Language for Social and Instructional Purposes, Language for Language Arts, Language for Mathematics, Language for Science, and Language for Social Studies
<b>Scaffold/ Progression</b>	Cumulative progressions, with each proficiency level building on the previous one	A progression of increasingly greater language development required to accomplish the task in English, but the tasks and activities do not scaffold across the proficiency levels
<b>Potential Uses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use as guide for understanding typical patterns of language development</li> <li>• Show how language development grows over time to the next level of language complexity</li> <li>• Scaffold learning and resources across all levels of language proficiency</li> <li>• Score Alternate ACCESS Speaking and Writing domains</li> <li>• Interpret Alternate ACCESS scores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand what students at different levels of language proficiency can do with language</li> <li>• Expand understanding of what the process of language development can look like</li> <li>• Support collaboration and scaffolding to help students engage in content-area learning and develop language at the same time</li> <li>• Differentiate instruction and classroom assessment for language</li> </ul>

# Organization of Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors

The Alt PLDs are organized into five levels of English language proficiency for two communication modes: interpretive and expressive (see Figure 2). The two communication modes encompass the four language domains (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), as outlined in federal requirements for language proficiency standards, and they spotlight the multimodal nature of both language development and content-area learning. They also position language as being more tightly integrated with other communication resources by including viewing and representing. These expanded communication modes invite multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression, thereby extending accessibility principles to all multilingual learners, including those with more intensive learning needs.

**Figure 2. WIDA Modes of Communication**



The Alt PLDs describe how multilingual learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities use and understand English language and communication toward the end of each level of English language proficiency. Each end-of-level descriptor builds on previous proficiency levels (e.g., PL4 = PL1 + PL2 + PL3). In other words, English language development, as depicted by the Alt PLDs, is cumulative. The Alt PLDs are not grade-specific but rather can be applied across grade clusters and grade-appropriate alternate academic content.

The Alt PLDs are written along three dimensions of language use: discourse, sentence, and word/phrase.

- The **discourse dimension** communicates overall meaning across an entire text, including how a language user constructs, communicates, or understands the overall message conveyed, including its organization, connectedness, and degree of detail.
- For multilingual learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities, this also includes the **sentence dimension** as an indication of grammatical complexity of clause structures (i.e., chunks of language, and simple, compound, or complex sentences).
- The discourse dimension is supported by the **word/phrase dimension**, which adds precision and specificity to communication. Like all language learners, multilingual learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities may often use high-frequency words, but as language develops, they can use and interpret cross-disciplinary and content-area specific language to express ideas and interpret concepts. The precision of student communication is also impacted by the degree to which it is embedded in **context**.

Educators can use the Alt PLDs to understand characteristics of language development at various levels of language proficiency in interpretive and expressive communication. This can help educators to scaffold learning and resources across levels of English language and communication proficiency, by recognizing where students are now and where they need to go next. However, as the Alt PLDs are not grade-level or grade-band specific, they must be interpreted with the lens of grade- and developmental-level appropriateness.

# Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors by Communication Mode

At each grade level, toward the end of a given alternate level of English language proficiency, and with individualized instruction, appropriate supports\*, accommodations, and communication tools...

	<b>Expressive</b> ...multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities will produce...	<b>Interpretive</b> ...multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities will interpret and respond to...
<b>End of Level 5</b> <b>Bridging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connected ideas with recognizable organization, including connectors and details</li> <li>• Simple and compound, connected sentence(s)</li> <li>• A growing selection of everyday and content-area words and phrases within and across familiar and novel social and academic contexts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connected ideas with recognizable organization, including connectors and details</li> <li>• A variety of sentences (e.g., simple, compound, and complex sentences)</li> <li>• A growing selection of everyday and content-area words and phrases within and across familiar and novel social and academic contexts</li> </ul>
<b>End of Level 4</b> <b>Expanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connected ideas with emerging details</li> <li>• Simple, connected sentence(s)</li> <li>• A selection of everyday and content-area words and phrases applicable in familiar social and academic contexts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connected ideas with emerging details</li> <li>• Simple and compound, connected sentence(s)</li> <li>• A selection of everyday and content-area words and phrases applicable in familiar and novel social and academic contexts</li> </ul>
<b>End of Level 3</b> <b>Developing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiar ideas with occasional details</li> <li>• <i>Spoken</i> simple sentences and <i>written</i> chunks of language, phrases, or simple clauses (e.g., subject + verb)</li> <li>• High-frequency, familiar words and phrases as part of routine and familiar social and academic contexts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiar ideas with occasional details</li> <li>• Simple, connected sentence(s)</li> <li>• High-frequency, familiar words and phrases as part of routine and familiar social and academic contexts</li> </ul>
<b>End of Level 2</b> <b>Emerging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional communication of familiar ideas with attempted details</li> <li>• <i>Spoken</i> chunks of language, phrases, or simple clauses (e.g., subject + verb) and <i>written</i> word(s)</li> <li>• High-frequency, familiar words and phrases relying on concrete, immediate social and academic contexts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional communication of familiar ideas with attempted details</li> <li>• Chunks of language, phrases, or simple clauses (e.g., subject + verb)</li> <li>• High-frequency, familiar words and phrases relying on concrete, immediate social and academic contexts</li> </ul>
<b>End of Level 1</b> <b>Entering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional communication of familiar idea</li> <li>• Emerging expression of letters or a word</li> <li>• Frequently reoccurring emerging expressions based on immediate social and academic contexts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional communication of familiar ideas</li> <li>• Emerging expressions of letters or word(s)</li> <li>• Frequently reoccurring emerging expressions based on immediate social and academic contexts</li> </ul>

\*Appropriate supports includes use of multimodalities and translanguaging.



## Organization of the Alternate Can Do Descriptors

The Alternate Can Dos are organized by grade bands (K–2, 3–5, 6–8 and 9–12) that correspond to those in the new WIDA Alternate ACCESS. Within each grade band, the descriptors are organized by interpretive (listening and reading) and expressive (speaking and writing) communication modes for each ELD standard and the five levels of English language development: Entering (Level 1), Emerging (Level 2), Developing (Level 3), Expanding (Level 4), and Bridging (Level 5).

The Alt Can Dos describe what multilingual learners at each of the language development levels *can do* with communication and language in English at each of the levels in relation to a learning task. The Alt Can Dos provide examples of a language tasks or activities, and the Alt PLDs describe the type and amount of language expected to achieve the task or activity in English at a given proficiency level. Thus, the Alt Can Dos and the Alt PLDs work together to support educators' understanding of language development at each level.

When developing the Alternate Can Dos, a variety of state alternate academic achievement standards were referenced to determine appropriate classroom expectations for multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities and to provide context for the Alt Can Do Descriptors. The Alt Can Dos are not exhaustive but are meant to help guide the planning and conversation around meaningful participation of language learners in standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The descriptors are a sampling of the language expectations as students develop in English language proficiency. The sample activities do not necessarily build on each other across proficiency levels. In fact, the Alt Can Dos in a single strand may be on different topics to provide multiple example topics in each standard and language domain within the interpretive and expressive modes of communication.

# Grades K–2 Alternate Can Do Descriptors

## Expressive Language Grades K–2

By the end of each of the given levels of English language development, multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities can...

Social and Instructional Language Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Identify a feeling	Make a request using simple words and gestures	Tell about a hobby or interest	Identify ways to help a classmate	Explain why something is liked or disliked

English Language Arts Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Sort letter tiles	Write their name	Talk about an event from a familiar story	Share information from a familiar book	Recount similarities and differences in two stories

Mathematics Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Count to 10	Sort and count objects (e.g., toy bears)	Describe an object in the physical world using geometric shapes	Compare the length of two basic classroom objects (e.g., ruler and pencil)	Explain how to solve a simple math problem from a picture or real objects

Science Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Name an attribute of an object (color, size, shape, weight, buoyancy)	List multiple attributes of an object	Describe the qualities of things that grow	Compare attributes of similar objects	Describe one way people can protect natural resources

Social Studies Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Name symbols on a map (compass rose, roads)	Share life events or activities using visual supports	Sequence events or activities	Share simple observations of community helpers	Explain what a particular community helper does

## Interpretive Language Grades K-2

By the end of each of the given levels of English language development, multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities exhibit behaviors indicating that they can...

Social and Instructional Language Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Participate in daily routines	Match the activity with its components (e.g., playing a game with a ball)	Respond when it is their turn during multiple-turn exchanges	Answer questions about a social story	Identify familiar persons, places, or events based on description

English Language Arts Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Associate initial letter sounds with a word	Respond to yes/no questions about familiar topics	Point to a picture that corresponds to a story	After listening to or reading a story, identify people from the story	Respond to who, what, where, when questions about details in a text

Mathematics Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Point to a named shape (e.g., triangle, circle, square)	Match quantities (1-10) in response to oral or written numerals	Sort objects according to attributes	Identify when a quantity is more or less than another quantity	Demonstrate adding and subtracting concepts (e.g., "put together" or "take from" group) based on oral or written description

Science Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Sort animals based upon common attributes (e.g., scales, feathers, fur)	Identify objects based on description of attributes	Show how objects will respond to gravity based on a demonstration	Follow multi-step directions for recycling different materials (e.g., paper or plastic)	Match evidence to observations that provide reasons plants need light and water to grow

Social Studies Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Match a description of a family activity with a representation	Sort representations of community helpers (e.g., mail carrier, chef, construction worker) into categories	Identify symbols on a map in response to prompts	Identify ways that people are the same and different	Sequence events using a timeline

# Grades 3–5 Alternate Can Do Descriptors

## Expressive Language Grades 3–5

By the end of each of the given levels of English language development, multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities can...

Social and Instructional Language Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Say "no" to refuse or disagree in appropriate contexts	Label emotions	Describe friendly actions	Ask questions to understand a peer's lived experience	Add on to the ideas of others
English Language Arts Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Use words, pictures and/or actions to demonstrate how a character in a story is feeling	Answer who or what questions about the text	Compare and contrast characters using sentence frames	List details that support main idea	Create a message that recounts events or personal experiences
Mathematics Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Name the hours or minutes on a digital clock	Compare single digit and double-digit numbers	State the value of coins using a simple sentence	Ask questions about data on a graph	Make comparative statements about data using a picture graph
Science Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Name parts of a model that show what plants need to grow (e.g., water, sun)	Describe the different parts of a model	Produce simple statements about cause-and-effect relationships in familiar contexts	Compare items or substances using weights or measures	Explain cause and effect relationships using a model
Social Studies Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Label items on a graph	Provide an example from informational text	Describe community jobs based upon pictures	Describe physical characteristics of different landforms on a map	Compare and contrast differences between now and the past

## Interpretive Language Grades 3–5

By the end of each of the given levels of English language development, multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities exhibit behaviors indicating that they can...

Social and Instructional Language Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Match feeling words to their representation	Identify words, symbols, or characteristics that represent their community	Indicate who to get help from based on a description	Respond to the comments or ideas of others	Apply ideas from oral discussions to new situations
English Language Arts Alternate Can Do Descriptor				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Choose correct emotion in response to a character from a text	Demonstrate understanding of new vocabulary	Determine a character's attributes from a text	Sequence the parts of a familiar story	Describe events that occur due to an action in a text
Mathematics Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Identify angles in a shape	Demonstrate the sum of number combinations up to 10 based on an oral description	Illustrate division when prompted to divide into fair or equal shares	Use an object, visual, or model to demonstrate comprehension of fraction words such as half, fourth, third, and tenth	Identify shapes in response to a sentence description of defining attributes
Science Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Identify elements (e.g., temperatures, rainfall) of data in a graph or chart	Organize objects or items according to their descriptions of weight presented in oral or written text	Follow two-step instructions to measure the weight of objects	Follow multi-step instructions to create a model	Identify changes or explanations of causal relationships based on descriptions of data
Social Studies Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Identify environmental symbols in the school and community	Respond to who, what, where, when questions when looking at a map	Match job descriptions (simple sentence) with corresponding pictures	Sequence pictures based on oral or written texts	Compare and contrast members of the community and their roles/responsibilities

# Grades 6–8 Alternate Can Do Descriptors

## Expressive Language Grades 6–8

By the end of each of the given levels of English language development, multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities can...

Social and Instructional Language Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
State needs and wants	Ask a peer to clarify an idea	State personal goals or accomplishments	Describe decisions that impact a community	Adapt formal and informal language to the appropriate context

English Language Arts Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Retell explicitly stated information from a text	Retell plot using sentence starters	Compare two or more elements of a text	Summarize information from a text	Compare and contrast themes across two or more related texts or media

Mathematics Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
State a prediction	Describe "equal share" in relation to a division problem	Make a prediction based on evidence	Summarize data from a graph or table	Construct a graph using data the student collected

Science Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Communicate ideas through drawing, gesture, and/or text	Answer questions based upon a data set	Identify a problem and possible solution	Explain how an organ or system of organs helps keep an animal alive	Explain with detail the results of an experiment

Social Studies Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
List public goods or services that taxes provide	State facts and opinions about a historical event	Describe geographical data represented in maps and other geographical tools	Explain how countries solve problems	Support opinions or explanations with evidence

## Interpretive Language Grades 6–8

By the end of each of the given levels of English language development, multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities exhibit behaviors indicating that they can...

Social and Instructional Language Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Identify one resource to help reduce asocial or emotional health risks	Identify information in charts or tables when given an oral, written, or visual prompt	Respond to others' comments on a topic to further the discussion	Change steps in a plan to meet a personal goal based on new information	Identify unfamiliar words when reading or listening and seek support for understanding
English Language Arts Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Match picture, icon, or realia to related text or multimedia	Answer who, what, where, when questions about a text or multimedia	Sequence events from a narrative text	Identify details in a text including central ideas, characters, and setting	Associate a specific meaning of multi-meaning words or phrases in text and/or multimedia
Mathematics Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Identify words/phrases that can be used to compare relationships between numbers	Locate key words to solve real-world problems using math manipulatives	Match real-world problems to mathematical representations	Indicate type of operation for a given word problem	Demonstrate comprehension of oral, textual, or visual information using a graph
Science Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Use a model of the Earth, Sun, and Moon to demonstrate a month/year	Classify planets and non-planets based on clues	Match cause to effect of events or phenomena	Follow instructions to conduct a simple experiment	Connect a data set with results of an experiment that shows changes in the properties of substances before and after changes have occurred
Social Studies Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Identify directionality on a map or diagram (e.g., above, below, north, south)	Follow one-step directions to find an object on a map	Identify the timeframe of a text (e.g., past, present, future)	Follow multi-step directions to find an object on a map or diagram	Demonstrate the impact of human activities on the natural environment based on an informational text or other media

# Grades 9–12 Alternate Can Do Descriptors

## Expressive Language Grades 9–12

By the end of each of the given levels of English language development, multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities can...

Social and Instructional Language Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Respond in ways that express agreement/disagreement or approval/disapproval	Ask for clarification of ideas or concepts during a discussion	Ask questions about another person's feelings or perspectives	Write to a friend (e.g., email, note, letter)	Work with peers to establish class goals
English Language Arts Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
State a main idea presented in a text or other media	Retell an event from personal experience or from a text in sequential order	State a claim with supporting evidence	Describe how characters, ideas, or events change over the course of a text	Revise writing based on peer or teacher feedback
Mathematics Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Use a model to add, subtract, or multiply whole numbers	Describe the elements (operation and variables) of an equation	Explain the meaning of a point on a graph	Explain the probability of events occurring as possible or impossible	Explain conclusions drawn from data
Science Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Name the changes (e.g., chemical, physical) during scientific experiments or explorations	Using a model for support, explain foundational scientific phenomena (e.g., seasons, water cycle)	Provide reasons or methods to support a scientific claim	Compare and contrast the influence of natural hazards on human activity	Explain the usefulness of scientific tools
Social Studies Alternate Can Do Descriptors				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Name various civic responsibilities	Create a timeline to show chronological order of events	Express an opinion (letter, email, in person) on a policy or area of concern to a local or state official	Describe the components of a personal budget	Explain with supporting details how technology has changed society/societies



## Interpretive Language Grades 9–12

By the end of each of the given levels of English language development, multilingual learners with significant cognitive disabilities exhibit behaviors indicating that they can...

<b>Social and Instructional Language Alternate Can Do Descriptors</b>				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Identify a mentor	Match supplies needed with a task, experiment, or recipe	Take/represent notes using a graphic organizer or model (e.g., T-chart, Venn diagram)	Identify key life experiences of a person through a text or other media	Evaluate the credibility of information
<b>English Language Arts Alternate Can Do Descriptors</b>				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Match facts or details to a topic or main idea	Identify parts of a story (e.g., introduction, climax, conclusion)	Respond to who, what, where, when questions based on a text	Compare the author's point of view with their own	Match figures of speech with literal and figurative examples
<b>Mathematics Alternate Can Do Descriptors</b>				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Identify congruent shapes by matching objects or visuals	Solve a math problem with one variable from given directions	Identify the appropriate operation based on a real-world problem	Follow instructions to measure ingredients in a recipe	Represent elements from a story problem in a graph
<b>Science Alternate Can Do Descriptors</b>				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Identify a model to show a scientific process	Use a table or other graphic representation to represent data	Match cause to effect in a science experiment based on a description	Organize data from a scientific investigation	Follow instructions to conduct a science experiment
<b>Social Studies Alternate Can Do Descriptors</b>				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Classify topics communicated in digital or print based media	Match branches of government with their duties	Create a timeline that corresponds to a text	Identify causes of historical events	Identify the impact of change-makers (e.g., MLK, Malala, Thomas Jefferson)

# Glossary

This glossary provides common terms and definitions of key vocabulary used throughout this document. It is intended to ensure that readers have a common understanding of important terminology.

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**Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors (Alt PLDs)** are detailed articulations of the growth in interpretive (listening and reading) and expressive language (speaking and writing) for multilingual learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities across five levels of English proficiency.

**Alternative modes of communication** can be systems or devices that support communication efforts of students with language impairments or significant cognitive disabilities. These systems can include augmentative and assistive communication (AAC) options, such as picture books, picture cards, or computerized speech-generating devices, to name a few (Huff & Christensen, 2018).

**Communication** is a social event that requires sending and receiving messages with shared understanding of meaning. The tools for communication can include body movements, such as hand gestures or facial expressions (e.g., smiling or frowning), and symbols and sounds (e.g., grunts, phrases, and words; Huff & Christensen, 2018).

**Communication modes** refer to a consolidated and more inclusive way of defining the four traditional language domains of listening, reading, speaking, and writing in the *WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework's* Language Expectations and Proficiency Level Descriptors (WIDA, 2020). Specifically, the WIDA ELD Standards Framework consolidates the four language domains into two communication modes: interpretive and expressive.

**Conveyed expressions** refers to information that is shared through acts of communication, such as oral, written, or sign language; images; voice; body positioning; or symbols on augmentative and assistive communication devices or sounds.

**Cross-disciplinary language** is used in the Word/Phrase Dimension of the Alt PLDs. This term refers to common academic language used across content areas. Examples of this kind of general academic language include *analyze*, *evaluate*, *critique*, and *identify*. (In the 2012 edition of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, this term was labeled as *specific language*.)

**Discipline-specific language** is used in the Word/Phrase Dimension of the Alt PLDs. This term refers to how language is used in distinctive ways within each discipline or field. For example, words like *substitute* and *intersect* have particular meanings for mathematics; *defense* and *goal* have meanings specific to physical education. (In the 2012 edition of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, this term was labeled as technical language.)

**Everyday language** is used in the Word/Phrase Dimension of the Alt PLDs. In some ways similar to Tier 1 language, this term refers to non-technical language, such as *puppies* instead of *canines*, or *plussing* instead of *addition*. (In the 2012 edition of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, this term was labeled as *general language*.)

**Expressive communication mode** includes speaking, writing, and representing. For multilingual students with significant cognitive disabilities, the expectations for the expressive mode of communication include engaging in written and oral communication in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences (Christensen & Mitchell, 2021).

**Interpretive communication mode** includes reading, listening, and viewing. For multilingual students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, the expectations for the interpretive mode include processing, understanding, interpreting, and evaluating spoken language, symbols, written language, and text in a variety of situations (Christensen, Mitchell, & Burton 2021).

**Key Language Uses** refer to the four broad patterns of academic language used across content areas (Narrate, Inform, Explain, Argue) within the WIDA ELD Standards. They are defined in the following ways:

- **Narrate: Language to convey real or imaginary experiences through stories and histories.** Narratives can serve many purposes, including to instruct, entertain, teach, or support persuasion.
- **Inform: Language to provide factual information.** As students convey information, they define, describe, compare, contrast, organize, categorize, or classify concepts, ideas, or phenomena.
- **Explain: Language to account for how things work or why things happen.** As students explain, they substantiate the inner workings of natural, human made, and social phenomena.
- **Argue: Language to justify claims using evidence and reasoning.** Argue can be used to advance or defend an idea or solution, change the audience's point of view, bring about action, or accept a position or evaluation of an issue.

**Language** is a structured and shared form of communication, such as spoken and written words, figures, characters, and gestures, or a combination of these. Language includes rules that dictate word order, tense, social use, and these apply differently depending on the culture in which the language is used (Huff & Christensen, 2018).

**Mode** refers to a meaning-making system that includes such elements as oral and written language, symbols, charts, tables, graphs, images, videos, voice, body positioning, and sounds. See communication modes.

**Multilingual learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities** are students in the K–12 educational system who have been identified as English learners per federal guidelines and who have one or more disabilities that significantly limit their intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior as documented in their individualized education programs (IEPs; Christensen, Gholson, & Shyyan, 2018).

**Representing** is an expressive mode of communication to create meanings using images, graphic representations, movement, video, graphics, or other visual means.

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