

## **Alignment of Standards for the Early Learning Profession and for ELLs**

While comprehensive research has not been conducted to specifically determine which ESL or bilingual programs are more effective (MacSwan & Pray, 2005) in terms of L2 acquisition, all formal programs for ELLs are guided by federal, national, and state standards for the profession. For early learning professionals in Pennsylvania, these would include [NCLB](#) (2001), [ACEI](#) (2009), [NAEYC](#) (2001), and [TESOL](#) (2006) standards for PreK-12 English language learners, the [Pennsylvania Standards for Early Childhood](#) (2007, 2008), the [Pennsylvania English Language Proficiency Standards or PA ELPS for ELLS](#) (2005, 2007), the [World Class Instruction and Design Assessment \(WIDA\) English Language Proficiency Standards \(ELPS\)](#) (2007). The new [Basic Educational Circular \(BEC\)](#) (22 Pa. Code § 4.26) for ESL and bilingual guidelines within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also provides comprehensive information and links to pertinent resources. [Note: The reader can click on the links above to the websites listing complete standards.]

Since readers are most likely to be familiar with NCLB, PA Standards for Early Childhood, ACEI, and NAEYC standards, a brief description of the other guidelines that specifically emphasize ELL student learning follows. The PA ELPS are based on the WIDA ELPS. They focus on listening, speaking, reading, and writing with six levels of proficiency: 1) *entering*, 2) *beginning*, 3) *developing*, 4) *expanding*, 5) *bridging*, and 6) *reaching* (PDE, 2005, 2007).

TESOL (2006) standards focus on five areas of communication:

- Standard 1- social, intercultural, and instructional
- Standard 2- language arts
- Standard 3- mathematics
- Standard 4- science; and
- Standard 5- social studies.

Goal 1: *To use English to communicate in social settings* and Goal 2: *To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways* are linked directly to Standard 1. Goal 3: *To use English to achieve academically in all content areas* relates to Standards 2 through 5. There are five grade level clusters—PreK-K, Grades 1-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12-- related to each of the language domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The language proficiency levels for each grade cluster and domain are as follows: 1) *starting*; 2) *emerging*; 3) *developing*; 4) *expanding*; and 5) *bridging*. These proficiency levels are developmentally aligned with the goals and standards of communication.

Culturally competent early learning professionals are knowledgeable about these federal, state, and professional standards, particularly in the areas that focus specifically on culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The PA ELPS, WIDA ELPS, and TESOL PreK-12 standards, in particular, have been designed so that educators can deliberately align curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices to meet the needs of ELLs. As early care and early learning professional develop their programs and activities, these particular standards need to be included, along with other national and state requirements (i.e., PA Standards for Early Childhood, NAEYC, ACEI), to ensure that culturally responsive practices are implemented.