

# Introduction

The New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education (NYSED OBE), in its continued effort to raise achievement for all LEP/ELLs, has developed the New York State learning standards for English as a second language. These standards are meant to serve as the foundation for ESL curriculum, instruction, and assessment for all LEP/ELLs in New York State, grades Pre-K through 12. The NYS ESL learning standards also serve as the framework for the New York State ESL Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), which is administered annually to all LEP/ELLs in New York.

The ESL standards articulate the abilities and competencies that LEP/ELLs must demonstrate to successfully integrate into the English academic mainstream. The ESL standards combine the principles of second language learning with the language development necessary for success in the academic content areas. Proficiency in the English language, which is essential to meet the standards in other academic content areas, is made explicit as a developmental goal.

The ESL standards view second language education as consisting of learning English for authentic purposes in both social and academic settings. Through meaningful and purposeful interactions, LEP/ELLs explore ideas and concepts at a pace that reflects their level of English proficiency and academic preparedness. LEP/ELLs at all levels of English proficiency engage in standards-based tasks that build on their academic, language, and cultural experiences.

Unique to the NYS ESL standards is Standard 5, the standard on cross-cultural knowledge and understanding. LEP/ELLs bring a rich background of cultural experiences to their classrooms. Standard 5 capitalizes on this background to develop LEP/ELLs' familiarity with their new social and academic environment in the United States, as well as to foster cross-cultural awareness in the multicultural American society.

The NYS ESL learning standards include the minimum requirements outlined by the NYS English language arts learning standards:

Minimum Requirements for All Students				
Grades	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
PreK-1	Students will listen on a daily basis.	Students will speak on a daily basis.	Students will read a minimum of 25 books or the equivalent per year across all content areas and standards.	Students will write on a daily basis across all content areas.
Grade 2-12				Students will write an average of 1,000 words per month across all content areas and standards.

## Limited English Proficient English Language Learners

In New York State, learners of English as a second language are students classified as “limited English proficient” (LEP) because they come from a home where a language other than English is spoken and score at below “Proficiency” on the LAB-R or score at the Beginning, Intermediate, or Advanced level of English as measured on the NYSESLAT. Diverse student profiles exist within the overall classification of LEP. There are LEP/ELLs who may be gifted and there are many with a high level of proficiency in their native language. Others may not be able to read or write their native language because they have had a limited or interrupted formal education in their own country. Finally, there is a population of LEP students who have been identified as having special needs and have been referred for special education services. All of these LEP students must receive instruction in ESL as shown in the following chart.

Required Units of ESL/ELA Instructions				
Grades	English	LEVELS OF PROFICIENCY		
		Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced
K-8	ESL	2	2	1
	ELA			1
9-12	ESL	3	2	1
	ELA			1

Through the NYS ESL learning standards, students **use** English to **learn** English.

Instruction based on the NYS ESL learning standards is essentially characterized by *using* language to *learn* language, and by using all four language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Second language acquisition research highlights the crucial role of reading and the importance of using language in meaningful and authentic exchanges, for language growth to occur. Through authentic discourse and negotiation, at levels where language is comprehensible yet challenging, LEP/ELLs acquire not only effective language structures and pragmatics, but also the language needed for academic success. Students create meaning as they engage in language-rich practices both in personal interactions and through text. In this standards-based model of instruction, language teaching continues to be made explicit in ESL classrooms, but does not form the core of the ESL curriculum. Rather, explicit language teaching, often through “mini-lessons,” supports the standards and serves authentic and academic tasks. In creative and meaningful language practice that typifies standards-based ESL instruction, fluency, accuracy, and application are equal partners.

## NYSESLAT and LAB-R

The New York State Education Department has developed the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) to measure the English language arts proficiency of LEP/ELLs across the State, grades K through 12. Administered each spring, the NYSESLAT is designed to measure the growth in English language ability of LEP/ELLs from year to year. The NYSESLAT identifies the English proficiency level of LEP/ELLs as either Beginning, Intermediate, or Advanced. The NYSESLAT also identifies those LEP/ELLs who have achieved a Proficient level of English and no longer require ESL and/or bilingual services.

The NYSESLAT consists of four subtests based on language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The items on the NYSESLAT are written by ESL and bilingual teachers in New York State and are based on the NYS learning standards in ESL.

The Language Assessment Battery-Revised (LAB-R) was developed by The New York City Department of Education and adopted by NYSED to identify those incoming students who may be eligible for bilingual education or ESL services. All incoming students who live in a home where a language other than English is spoken, as confirmed by the Home Language Survey, are tested with the LAB-R upon admission to a public school. A score below the designated cut score for the child determines eligibility for ESL or bilingual services. The LAB-R is administered only once to each incoming student. After placement into either a bilingual or ESL classroom, achievement in the English language is measured annually with the NYSESLAT, as described above.

The LAB-R consists of four subtests based on language skills—speaking, listening, reading and writing, similar to the NYSESLAT. There are five levels of the LAB-R, with each level administered to those students in the grades shown below.

LAB-R Level	Grades
I	K-1
II	2-3
III	4-5
IV	6-8
V	9-12

## Description of Proficiency Levels

The NYSED Commissioner's Regulations, Part 154, and Title III of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, identify three levels of English proficiency for LEP/ELLs: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced. Students' levels of proficiency are initially determined through the LAB-R, which is administered to an incoming student upon entry into the school system. Progress in learning English as a second language is measured each spring by the NYSESLAT. The scores on the NYSESLAT indicate the proficiency level the student has achieved each year, and whether or not the student's level of English is high enough to exit the ESL or bilingual program.

The descriptions of the proficiency levels that follow were developed by working groups of teachers and administrators of LEP/ELLs across New York State, with reference to other published proficiency-level descriptions. The descriptions represent the typical abilities of LEP/ELL students at each level.

Within each level there are degrees of ability. The subdivisions of each proficiency level describe the spectrum of proficiency and growth more realistically than an aggregate description of the level. Thus, in the Beginning level and in the Intermediate level, there are three degrees of proficiency for each language skill. In the Advanced level there are two degrees of proficiency.

It is important for educators of LEP/ELLs to note that not all students placed in one level fully match the description of each language skill at that level. It is not uncommon for newly arrived LEP/ELLs to be more proficient in speaking and listening skills

than in reading and writing, or more proficient in listening than in speaking. Likewise, some LEP/ELLs enter our school system with higher levels of proficiency in reading and writing, but lag in their speaking and listening skills. Schools and districts must pay close attention to the proficiency levels demonstrated by their LEP/ELLs in each of the language skill areas in order to provide the most appropriate placement and effective instruction.

The proficiency-level descriptions in this section outline the expected competencies of LEP/ELLs in grades 2 through 12 for each language skill area in each of the three proficiency levels. The descriptions do not necessarily reflect the early literacy and language development of early childhood LEP/ELLs. Most children under age seven have not yet mastered their first language and are still in the process of developing more complex cognitive processes. The language of young children is usually characterized as literal, context dependent, of limited vocabulary, and not highly detailed. Some language skills, such as using cognates and understanding idioms, are too cognitively demanding for this age group. Similarly, these younger learners, from grades Pre-K through 2, develop early literacy skills in comparable developmental stages as native speakers (see *Early Literacy Guidance: Prekindergarten - Grade 3*, NYSED). The rate at which these children achieve literacy skills in English reflects the extent to which they have already acquired listening and speaking proficiency in English and the extent to which they have developed pre-literacy skills in their native language.

### ***Beginning-Level ESL: Listening***

#### **LOW BEGINNING**

- Students at this low beginning level of ESL can recognize a very limited number of common individual words and learned phrases, even in a predictable context and on everyday personal topics.
- They can understand greetings and some simple instructions, and depend on gestures and other contextual clues.
- They require extensive assistance to make language comprehensible.

#### **MID BEGINNING**

- Students at this mid beginning stage can understand a number of individual words, common social phrases, and simple short sentences on topics of immediate personal relevance or related to the immediate physical environment.
- They can understand simple personal information questions and simple commands or directions related to the immediate context.
- They continue to struggle to understand simple instructions without clear contextual clues.
- Students at this stage continue to rely on visual support and other assistance.
- They frequently understand some short, previously learned words or phrases, particularly through use of cognates or when the situation strongly supports understanding, although they can rarely understand an ongoing message.
- They usually require repetition, rephrasing, or modified speech.

#### **HIGH BEGINNING**

- Students can understand key words, formulaic phrases, and most short sentences in simple, predictable conversations on topics of immediate personal relevance.
- They understand questions related to personal experience and requests related to the immediate context.
- They frequently need assistance to comprehend meaning and sometimes may understand the main idea of short simple speech on familiar topics.

- They can sometimes understand an ongoing message but still often require repetition, rephrasing, or modified speech.

## ***Beginning-Level ESL: Speaking***

### **LOW BEGINNING**

- Students demonstrate little or no functional communicative ability in English.
- They demonstrate almost no control of basic grammar structures and verb tenses, and have a very limited vocabulary.
- They depend greatly on gestures in expressing meaning and may also switch to first language at times.
- Their pronunciation difficulties may significantly impede communication.

### **MID BEGINNING**

- Students can communicate in face-to-face interactions in a very limited way, using single words and short, learned phrases sufficient for meeting simple needs and for expressing basic courtesies.
- They demonstrate little control of basic grammar structures and verb tenses and continue to depend on gestures in expressing meaning.
- Their pronunciation difficulties may significantly impede communication.
- They frequently need assistance and are often misunderstood even by attentive listeners.
- Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses and occasionally by use of native language.

### **HIGH BEGINNING**

- Students can communicate basic immediate needs and simple personal experiences with some difficulty, in short informal face-to-face conversations.
- They can describe a situation or tell a simple story, using a variety of short sentences.
- They demonstrate some control of basic grammar and can use basic time expressions to communicate past events with limited accuracy.
- They demonstrate adequate vocabulary for routine everyday communication that relates to familiar topics.
- They can ask and answer simple questions and initiate and respond to simple statements.
- They can sometimes recombine learned material in original ways, although with limited grammatical accuracy.
- They are sometimes misunderstood even by attentive listeners.

## ***Beginning-Level ESL: Reading***

### **LOW BEGINNING**

- Students are limited in their ability to meaningfully decode words and interpret sound-symbol relationships in English.
- They may be able to read isolated words, common phrases, and familiar public signs with visual support.

### **MID BEGINNING**

- Students can read familiar personal and place names, common public signs, and simple texts especially if related to immediate needs.

- They can find information in a simple text with clear format and layout.
- They can match illustrations to short sentences, containing some familiar words.
- They may understand clearly related sentences when context, background knowledge, or visual information supports meaning.
- Punctuation clues rarely support students' comprehension.

#### **HIGH BEGINNING**

- Students usually read slowly, word by word.
- They understand many common words and/or phrases and can phonetically decode familiar and some unfamiliar words.
- They sometimes understand new words and phrases in context or through cognates.
- They sometimes understand common sentence connectors.
- Students can sometimes locate facts and specific details in short, simple texts with clear layout.
- They often understand related sentences when context, prior knowledge, or visual information supports meaning.
- Punctuation clues begin to support students' comprehension.

### ***Beginning-Level ESL: Writing***

#### **LOW BEGINNING**

- Students have few or no practical writing skills in English.
- Their limited knowledge of English and English spelling conventions limits their ability to write down unfamiliar words.
- They are sometimes able to write isolated words and/or common phrases, and may be able to copy/record time, addresses, names, and numbers.

#### **MID BEGINNING**

- Students can write a few phrases about self and family or other highly familiar information such as a simple description.
- They have minimal practical writing skill in English, and demonstrate limited awareness of sound-letter correspondence and mechanics.
- They can write some familiar numbers, letters, and words and can write down basic personal identification information.

#### **HIGH BEGINNING**

- Students have gained some practical writing skill in English, yet have limited independent expression.
- They demonstrate some awareness of sound-letter correspondence and mechanics and can produce sentences and short phrases that have been previously learned or that relate to familiar topics.
- They use simple vocabulary and sentence structure, and their writing is often characterized by errors not made by native English writers.

### ***Intermediate-Level ESL: Listening***

#### **LOW INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can recognize many topics by familiar words and phrases.
- They understand simple, short, direct questions related to personal experience and general knowledge and can understand many common everyday instructions and directions related to the immediate context.

- With strong support and clear context, students often understand new information.
- They can sometimes identify the main idea and details when listening to extended speech on a familiar topic.
- They benefit from repetition or rephrasing.

#### **MID INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can understand with some effort the overall message of oral discourse in moderately demanding contexts, including media broadcasts, and personally relevant topics.
- They may require repetition, rephrasing, or some modifications of speech for unfamiliar topics.
- They can understand a range of common vocabulary and a very limited number of idioms.
- They can understand simple, short, predictable phone messages, but have limited ability to understand extended speech on the phone and sometimes in person.
- They sometimes understand new information in brief personal interactions.
- They can often identify details when listening to extended speech and usually understand natural speech when the situation is familiar or fulfills immediate needs.

#### **HIGH INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can usually understand main ideas and identify key words and important details in oral discourse in sustained personal interactions.
- Students understand language in moderately demanding contexts, such as audiotapes and media broadcasts on everyday topics.
- They can understand a range of common vocabulary and a limited number of idioms.
- They comprehend contextualized, short sets of instructions and directions, but may still need repetition.
- They can understand simple, short, predictable phone messages.
- They sometimes understand speech on abstract or academic topics, although this understanding is often affected by length, topic familiarity, and cultural knowledge.
- They show evidence of understanding inferences.

### ***Intermediate-Level ESL: Speaking***

#### **LOW INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can maintain a face-to-face conversation on a familiar topic, using a variety of simple structures and even some complex ones.
- Their speech demonstrates a range of common words, some low-frequency vocabulary, and a limited number of idioms, although they may avoid topics with unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Their speech may include occasional word-for-word translations, and they sometimes have to repeat themselves to be understood by the general public.
- They correctly use a limited range of grammatical structures, and grammar and pronunciation errors are frequent and sometimes impede communication.
- They occasionally express original ideas with limited grammatical accuracy and much circumlocution regarding low-frequency vocabulary.
- Students continue to employ use of gestures and rely less frequently on visuals to communicate.

### **MID INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can communicate in social situations and in some less routine situations on familiar topics of personal relevance.
- They can communicate facts and ideas in some detail, adding detail or rephrasing messages to facilitate conversation.
- They can use a variety of structures with some omission or reduction of elements such as articles.
- Grammar and pronunciation errors are still common and may sometimes impede communication, especially when the students are speaking about academic topics.
- They demonstrate a range of everyday vocabulary, and some common phrases and idioms.
- Their use of more academic vocabulary may be characterized by inappropriate word choice and awkward phrasing.
- Their discourse is reasonably fluent, but hesitations and pauses are still frequent.
- They may over rely on familiar grammatical structures and vocabulary to communicate message.

### **HIGH INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can communicate somewhat comfortably and spontaneously in many common daily situations, participating in informal conversations and some formal conversations with some confidence.
- They can speak on familiar concrete and academic topics at a descriptive level, using a variety of vocabulary resources, although sometimes inappropriately.
- Grammar and pronunciation errors are relatively frequent, but rarely impede communication.
- Their discourse is reasonably fluent, but with frequent self-corrections and/or rephrasing to facilitate communication.
- They demonstrate control over most basic and many complex grammatical structures and have a growing inventory of common idiomatic language.
- Students at this stage can usually be understood by attentive listeners.

## ***Intermediate-Level ESL: Reading***

### **LOW INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can typically read a simple two- to three-paragraph text within a mostly familiar, mostly predictable context of daily life and experience, or a simple narrative, occasionally understanding the main idea of a text when content and language are familiar.
- They read word by word or in short phrases, and can understand most common words and/or phrases.
- They can often locate facts and some details in short, simple texts, and sometimes understand new information from texts with familiar language.
- They occasionally understand common cultural references.

### **MID INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can understand the purpose, main ideas, and some details in some shorter authentic and academic texts.
- They can find specific, detailed information in prose texts, and get specific details from routine texts, such as a set of instructions.
- They can read text with language that is mostly concrete and factual, with some abstract, conceptual, and technical vocabulary items.

- They can read with some fluency and speed, but often need to reread to clarify.
- They sometimes understand the meaning of new words, phrases, or idioms from context, and can sometimes distinguish between main and supporting ideas.
- They rarely understand texts that are grammatically complex or on unfamiliar topics.

#### **HIGH INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can understand main ideas, key words, and important details in lengthier social and academic texts.
- They can read printed or handwritten notes, letters, and schedules.
- They can often get new information about familiar topics from reading texts with clear organization.
- They can read simple texts on familiar academic topics with some fluency and speed, often understanding the meaning of new words from context.
- They can usually distinguish between main and supporting ideas in texts that are accessible because of familiar content and/or language.
- They sometimes understand texts that are grammatically complex or deal with unfamiliar topics.
- They often understand common cultural references in texts.

### ***Intermediate-Level ESL: Writing***

#### **LOW INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can write simple descriptions and narrations of events, stories, plans about self and family, or other highly familiar topics.
- They use familiar vocabulary and structures and often exhibit a lack of control over grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling.
- They can write original short texts and demonstrate some evidence of organizational ability in their writing.
- They can write on some concrete and familiar topics and write short messages such as postcards, notes, directions, and letters.

#### **MID INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can effectively convey an idea, opinion, feeling, or experience in a simple paragraph, though their writing often exhibits a lack of strong control over grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling.
- They can write short letters and notes on a familiar topic and reproduce in writing simple information they have received orally or visually.
- They demonstrate some effective control over writing when reproducing information.
- When creating their own texts, their language remains simple, and some phrases may be characterized by nonnative English word combinations.
- They can write on a variety of familiar topics and write original short texts, using familiar vocabulary and structures.
- They demonstrate some evidence of organizational ability.

#### **HIGH INTERMEDIATE**

- Students can effectively convey familiar information in familiar standard formats.
- They can effectively reproduce information received orally or visually, and can take simple notes from short oral presentations or from reference materials.
- They demonstrate good control over simple structures, but have difficulty with some complex structures and produce some nonstandard word combinations.

- They can write about topics relating to personal and academic interests, and show some ability to write organized and developed text.
- They use some cohesive devices appropriately and display some control of sentence structure and punctuation to indicate sentence boundaries and separation of ideas.
- They sometimes use inappropriate vocabulary and word forms.

### ***Advanced-Level ESL: Listening***

#### **LOW ADVANCED**

- Students can usually comprehend main points and most important details in oral discourse in moderately demanding language contexts, including media broadcasts.
- They often cannot sustain understanding of conceptually or linguistically complex speech and require slower speech, repetitions, and rewording.
- They often understand implications beyond surface meaning.
- They recognize but do not always understand an expanded inventory of concrete and idiomatic language.
- They can understand more complex indirect questions about personal experience, familiar topics, and general knowledge.
- They can understand short, predictable phone messages on familiar matters, but have problems understanding unknown details on unfamiliar matters.
- They have some difficulty following a faster conversation between native speakers.
- Their understanding of speech continues to be affected by length, topic familiarity, and cultural knowledge.

#### **HIGH ADVANCED**

- Students can comprehend many important aspects of oral language on social and academic topics, such as main points, most details, speaker's purpose, attitudes, levels of formality, and inferences.
- They can comprehend an expanded range of concrete, abstract, and conceptual language and can sustain understanding of conceptually or linguistically complex speech.
- They can understand sufficient vocabulary, idioms, colloquial expressions, and cultural references to understand detailed stories of general popular interest.
- They often have difficulty following rapid, colloquial, or idiomatic speech between native English speakers.
- Their understanding of English is much less frequently affected by length, topic familiarity, and cultural knowledge.

### ***Advanced-Level ESL: Speaking***

#### **LOW ADVANCED**

- Students can communicate effectively in most daily social and school situations.
- They can initiate and participate in conversations with confidence, speaking on familiar social and academic topics.
- They can provide more nuanced descriptions, opinions, and explanations, using a wide variety of concrete and abstract vocabulary and some technical vocabulary.
- They attempt to use precise word choice to communicate shades of meaning.
- Grammar and pronunciation errors still arise but rarely impede communication.
- Their speech is reasonably fluent and they are usually easily understood by native English speakers.

- They have control over most basic and complex grammatical structures and demonstrate increased understanding of use of situational and culturally appropriate language.

#### **HIGH ADVANCED**

- Students can confidently make prepared academic presentations.
- Their speech is fluent; they use a sophisticated range of vocabulary, including technical vocabulary, in both formal and informal settings.
- They demonstrate mastery of almost all grammatical structures.
- Grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation errors very rarely impede communication.
- They usually use precise word choice to communicate shades of meaning.
- They can actively and effectively engage in extended discussions in most social and academic situations.
- They use greater language resources to analyze, problem solve, and make decisions.
- They are easily understood by native speakers of English.

### ***Advanced-Level ESL: Reading***

#### **LOW ADVANCED**

- Students can understand main ideas, key words, and important details in lengthier passages in a wider range of personal and academic texts.
- They can usually adjust reading rate according to the content of the text, are able to use a wide range of complex textual cues to comprehend the meaning and structure of a text, including punctuation clues.
- They can understand most new words, given a clear context.
- They usually make appropriate low-level inferences, understand figurative language, and usually understand the author's purpose, point of view, and tone.
- They often understand texts that are either conceptually or linguistically complex.

#### **HIGH ADVANCED**

- Students can grasp main ideas, key words, and important details in a wide range of authentic social and academic texts.
- They read most texts, including grade-appropriate academic texts, fluently, adjusting reading rate according to the text.
- They usually understand texts that are conceptually and/or linguistically complex, and make appropriate inferences when necessary.
- They understand the author's purpose, point of view, and tone, and often understand figurative language.

### ***Advanced-Level ESL: Writing***

#### **LOW ADVANCED**

- Students can construct coherent paragraphs on familiar concrete topics, with clear main ideas and some supporting details, and with a developing sense of audience.
- They can effectively join two or three paragraphs into a larger text.
- They sometimes produce written discourse patterns in lengthier texts that are typical for their first language rather than typical for English.
- They can write effectively about a variety of topics, including academic topics, and usually display clear organization and development.

- They display an awareness of audience and purpose.
- They demonstrate control of most kinds of sentence structure, yet continue to make some errors in grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation.
- These errors, however, rarely interfere with communication.

#### HIGH ADVANCED

- Students can link sentences and paragraphs to form coherent texts to express ideas on familiar concrete and abstract topics, with clear main ideas, and with an appropriate sense of audience.
- They demonstrate good control over common sentence patterns, coordination, subordination, spelling, and mechanics.
- They continue to have occasional difficulty with some complex structures, with naturalness of phrases and expressions, with organization, and with style.
- They can write about a variety of topics, and use a variety of sentence structures for stylistic purposes.
- They make some errors in grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation, but these do not interfere with communication.

## Development of the NYS ESL Learning Standards

The New York State ESL Learning Standards:

- Align the NYS ELA standards with the TESOL standards
- Develop language and academic skills for content area learning
- Recognize and build on the cultural diversity of the population
- Provide a framework for ESL learning experiences, classroom practices, and curriculum development
- Set the parameters for ESL assessment

The NYS ESL learning standards are based on an alignment between the New York State English language arts (ELA) learning standards and the ESL standards developed by the national association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The NYS ESL standards reflect the standards-based curriculum and assessment initiatives promulgated by the New York State Education Department. In addition, they incorporate ideas, information, and concepts gleaned from *The Teaching of Language Arts to Limited English Proficient/English Language Learners: A Resource Guide for All Teachers*, published by the NYSED Office of Bilingual Education, and ESL standards from other states, cities, and organizations, as well as the standards for languages other than English (LOTE) in New York State. Through cross-referencing these sources, we have produced a document that provides consistency in goal and mission in New York, and one that is unique to the specific discipline of teaching English as a second language.

In the spring of 2000, NYSED identified a task force of educators of New York State's LEP/ELLs to provide advice on the development of a statewide ESL achievement test. The task force participated in the development of a conceptual framework for the achievement test, a set of language and learning objectives that represent high levels of achievement in English for all LEP/ELLs throughout the State. From these initial discussions, the New York State ESL learning standards were created.

With the assistance of the Center for Applied Linguistics, the ESL Standards Committee aligned the TESOL standards with the ELA standards for each grade-level cluster, and developed new performance indicators as needed. Simultaneously, teams of teachers around the State identified and developed sample classroom tasks that addressed the standards and performance indicators and that illustrated standards-based ESL instruction.

The resulting set of five ESL standards and sample classroom tasks was reviewed and edited by other committees and researchers in the fields of bilingual education and ESL, resulting in the ESL learning standards and performance indicators delineated in this document.

## The NYS ESL Learning Standards and Performance Indicators

The NYS ESL learning standards differ from other content-area standards in New York State in many significant ways. The ESL standards can be regarded as a springboard to content-area standards; they provide the knowledge and skill development for high-level student achievement in the non-ESL content classroom.

The ESL standards include learning and self-monitoring strategies as performance indicators. LEP/ELLs must develop the ability to draw on a variety of strategies to promote their own learning and monitor and self-correct their own language production at each level of language proficiency. Similarly, student collaboration, essential to second language growth, is highlighted as an indicator of success in meeting the standards.

The ESL standards, arranged in five areas of goals, draw on the cultural and linguistic diversity of the LEP/ELL and bilingual student population and the rich and varied understanding these students bring to the classroom from their educational experiences prior to entry into the United States. The standards also make specific reference to the use of the students' native language as a means to develop and support English language growth and attainment of the standards.

**Standard 1: English for information and understanding** refers to the competencies and knowledge of English that students must obtain in order to communicate effectively in social and academic settings. Students learning English as a second language learn, use, and reflect on English language and concepts from the core content areas, such as social studies, sciences, and mathematics. The organization of information and the ability to explain the relationships among pieces of information (in forms such as cause and effect, chronological order, problem/solution, comparing and contrasting, and interpreting) are the essential concepts in Standard 1.

**Standard 2: English for literary response, enjoyment, and expression** requires that students develop the knowledge and skills of English to read and understand rich literature that ranges from classical to contemporary, and includes works representing a variety of cultures. Students are required to present oral and written interpretations of literature, and write works of literature of their own. Through Standard 2, students gain an understanding of literary concepts such as genre, plot, setting, character, point of view, theme, and other literary elements. Students become familiar with and competent in using strategies in English such as predicting, previewing, reviewing, and purposeful listening to increase comprehension and meaning of text in English.

**Standard 3: English for critical analysis and evaluation** develops students' abilities to read, write, listen, and speak in English to analyze and evaluate complex texts and issues. Students learning English are required to consider divergent perspectives on oral and written texts and evaluate texts and interpretations of texts, using a variety of criteria. Students develop an understanding of the impact of personal and alternative points of view and structural features of text. They must use English to form, present, and defend their own positions on significant issues, both orally and in writing. To meet the requirements of Standard 3, LEP/ELLs are expected to take an experience, text, or idea, and question it from a variety of critical perspectives. These perspectives are informed by the students' cultural background and their experiences as newcomers to the United States.

**Standard 4: English for social and classroom interaction** outlines the skills and strategies, both in and out of school, that LEP/ELLs must master to communicate effectively in English. The focus of Standard 4 is to develop the competencies

The New York State ESL learning standards are arranged in five major goal areas:

1. English for information and understanding
2. English for literary response, enjoyment, and expression
3. English for critical analysis and evaluation
4. English for social and classroom interaction
5. English for cross-cultural knowledge and understanding

The NYS ESL learning standards are unique in that they:

- Include collaboration, learning strategies, and self-monitoring strategies as indicators of meeting the standard
- Account for all levels of language proficiency
- Incorporate knowledge and skills from earlier grade levels into performance indicators of higher grade levels
- Capitalize on the linguistic and cultural diversity of student population
- Highlight language features of English essential for second language learners
- Make explicit nonverbal and paralinguistic features of communication
- Promote culturally appropriate communicative competence
- Utilize the students' native language

Standards-based ESL instruction interweaves all four language skill areas: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Developing cultural awareness is interwoven throughout all of the standards.

students need to engage in functions such as negotiating, explaining, participating in discussions, following and providing directions, and requesting and providing assistance in English. The indicators in Standard 4 apply to an array of meaningful and authentic communicative contexts, from informal social situations to formal academic situations.

**Standard 5: English for cross-cultural knowledge and understanding** articulates the components of acquiring a “second culture” in both social and academic contexts. Interactions and knowledge that are subsumed under Standard 5 are designed to help LEP/ELLs entering the United States to be successful in their new host culture. Standard 5 validates and builds on the cultural background of the individual student, promotes articulation and exchange of ideas and assumptions across cultures, and provides a context in which the student can explicitly and implicitly acquire knowledge and understandings that facilitate the process of acculturation.

Teaching to Standard 5 requires an awareness of the dimensions of culture by ESL teachers, bilingual teachers, and other educators of LEP/ELLs. These dimensions include the varieties of cultural practices, norms, beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that fall under the general descriptor of “American.” In addition, Standard 5 heightens the contribution cultural diversity makes to classroom instruction and interaction. Education under Standard 5 does not promote a list of cultural “facts” or “dos and don’ts,” but rather encourages an exploration of the facets of culture, the student’s own as well as the cultures of others, and how culture is manifested in words, actions, and learning.

## Performance Indicators

The performance indicators of each standard identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students must master in order to demonstrate achievement of the standard. They inform instruction and assessment and move them toward task-oriented practices that address each standard. Content and concepts (e.g., issues, ideas, texts, and experiences) that lead toward meeting the standard are specified in the performance indicators. In addition, the particular skills that students need to demonstrate (e.g., interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating) are outlined.

Many performance indicators for each standard build cognitively from the early childhood level to the commencement level. These performance indicators are cumulative; they do not assume mastery of a particular indicator at prior grade levels. Some LEP/ELLs may demonstrate mastery of the performance indicators in their native language and thus require instruction in transferring these skills to English. Other students may not have these skills in their native language. For example, a high school ESL student cannot be assumed to have mastered the standard for the Elementary or Intermediate level, since this student might be a newly arrived student in his/her first or second year in the United States. The performance indicators are thus written in a way that responds to the varied educational backgrounds of the LEP/ELL population.

Other performance indicators resemble one another in their wording from grade level to grade level. This is partly due to the nature of second language learning—there are many common developmental stages among and between different age groups in learning a second language. It is expected, however, that the nature of the material and the cognitive, social, and academic demands increase from grade to grade. Thus, for example, Standard 4, performance indicator #8, “negotiate and manage interactions to accomplish social and classroom tasks,” is realized differently in the elementary classroom and the high school classroom on the basis of age appropriateness and student experiences.

Advanced-level students will have met the standard by meeting the requirements of each indicator as measured through in-class assessments as well as the NYSESLAT. Meeting the ESL standards indicates that these higher level LEP/ELLs are well on their way toward meeting the standards in other content areas, particularly ELA. The standards and performance indicators for the Beginning- and Intermediate-level students are expected to serve as an instructional base to prepare these students for learning experiences in the Advanced level of ESL. Teachers of Beginning- and Intermediate-level students must design their learning experiences to address each ESL standard and performance indicator and provide continuous assessment to measure growth toward meeting the standard.

## Sample Classroom Tasks and Learning Experiences

Standards-based education is realized through student engagement in comprehensive learning experiences that combine direct instruction, student construction of knowledge, use of all four language skills, multiple sources of information, and various forms of assessment. Learning experiences are designed around one or more learning standards and selected performance indicators. Learning experiences are most often comprised of tasks that help move the student forward toward meeting the standards. The standards cross one another, as do the performance indicators. While the performance indicators for the sample classroom tasks are identified for one standard only, many of these tasks reflect other ESL standards as well.

In developing learning experiences, teachers refer to the general concepts, knowledge, and skills that are represented within the standards. Engagement in the learning process shifts away from focusing on discrete and often unconnected classroom activities and isolated language units to a standards-based instructional approach that combines goals, student work and performance, and assessments. Much of this work is described by Wiggins and McTighe (1998) through their concept of “backward mapping.”

This document provides ESL and bilingual educators with sample classroom tasks that address one or more performance indicators within a particular standard. The tasks describe instructional practices that are designed for authentic, meaningful, and purposeful learning and student engagement. The tasks address the standards only within a broader context of learning experiences. These experiences include the background knowledge and skill development necessary for students to successfully engage in the task. The learning experiences also incorporate tools and techniques for assessing student progress and culminating performance. The sample tasks provide suggestions and ideas for developing learning experiences. They are not intended to stand alone nor do they represent lesson plans or a blueprint for ESL curriculum.

Each sample performance task is built around a particular theme, which is represented in each of the three proficiency levels, from Beginning to Advanced. The tasks for each proficiency level within this theme serve many purposes. The tasks are applicable to classes that are characterized by students of one proficiency level (e.g., a Beginning-level ESL class) or classes in which multiple levels of proficiency are represented. The tasks provide suggestions on how to differentiate instruction in multilevel proficiency classrooms. It is the role of the ESL teacher to ensure that the students at all proficiency levels are moving forward toward meeting the requirements of each standard.

In developing instructional modules and learning experiences, it is difficult to isolate one standard from another. Comprehensive ESL performance tasks address indicators in more than one standard.

NYSATL's outline for learning experiences includes the following elements:

- Learning context
- Assessment plan
- Student work
- Resources
- Instructional/ Environmental modifications
- Time required
- Reflection

Learning Experiences are peer reviewed following the NYSATL Peer Review Protocol, based on the following criteria:

- Relation to learning standards
- Intellectual challenge
- Assessment plan
- Engagement
- Adaptability
- Technology integration

The *NYS ESL Learning Standards* document is best used to:

- design authentic learning experiences
- develop ESL curriculum
- link language to content areas
- assess student performance, using an array of tools
- design performance tasks that interweave all four language skills
- correlate tasks at all levels of language proficiency, from beginning to advanced
- provide purposes for language use
- design staff development
- prepare students for NYS assessments in core subject areas

This document also includes a peer-reviewed learning experience for each grade-level cluster. As described in *The Teaching of Language Arts to Limited English Proficient/English Language Learners: A Resource Guide for All Teachers*, learning experiences are longer-term projects developed by teachers to holistically integrate the ESL standards and performance indicators, student work, assessments, and instructional practices. The learning experiences differ from the sample classroom tasks in that they clearly and purposefully integrate a number of ESL standards. Teachers develop learning experiences by balancing and integrating standards, student interests, teacher expertise, and evidence of achievement of the standards as reflected in student work. Each element informs the others as the teaching and learning move forward toward a culminating experience or project.

The learning experiences highlighted in this document were created by ESL and bilingual teachers in New York State using the NYS ESL standards. Each learning experience underwent a comprehensive and systematic peer review, either regionally or statewide. These peer reviews provided comments, feedback, and suggestions to the teachers based on a list of criteria from the New York State Education Department's Academy for Teaching and Learning (NYSATL) [www.nysatl.nysed.gov]. These criteria include: the relation of the learning experience to the ESL standards, the intellectual challenge, the assessment plan, the degree and quality of student engagement, the degree of adaptability to other student populations, and the integration of technology.

## How This Document Can Be Used

The ESL standards are designed to assist ESL and bilingual teachers and curriculum developers in providing rigorous and challenging instruction, including content-based instruction, for LEP/ELLs. This document provides these educators with key ideas, performance indicators, sample classroom tasks, sample learning experiences, and suggested assessment strategies. Taken together, these components provide a solid foundation for ESL instruction, curriculum, and assessment.

*The New York State ESL Learning Standards* is not a curriculum guide incorporating an instructional scope and sequence. The NYS ESL standards promote ESL instruction that is closely aligned with standards-based ELA and content-area instruction, and they provide schools and districts with a performance-based approach to second language education. Methods for presenting ESL content are suggested in this publication, but, ultimately, are the purview of the districts, schools, and teachers throughout the State. *The New York State ESL Learning Standards* respects the tradition of local choice of educators to select texts and materials, design assessment tools, and use an array of instructional strategies in the development of learning experiences for their LEP/ELLs.

NCLB, Title III-A, states that LEP/ELLs must meet the same standards as all other students and are required to take the State assessments in the core subject areas appropriate to their grade level. Only those LEP/ELLs who have been in the school system in the United States for three years or less may be exempt from the NYS English Language Arts Test in 4th and 8th grades. All high school students must pass the Comprehensive English Regents Examination in order to graduate. ESL teachers must help their LEP/ELLs prepare for these exams by interweaving the vocabulary, concepts, and language functions of the content areas throughout their lessons and learning experiences. It is strongly recommended that ESL and content-area teachers collaborate as they plan and provide instruction. This collaboration also enhances the ability of content-area teachers to apply specific language strategies that can make the content more comprehensible to LEP/ELLs.