

Can do descriptors

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Tan Huynh invited me to post guest on his website about my english language rating methods and newcomers.**This post originally appeared on www.empoweringELLS.com on August 7, 2017.** As an English as a Second Language Teacher (ESL), my job is to analyze the needs of my students and develop their english language and communication skills , read, listen and write skills. My goal is to help them achieve a proficient level of English that will enable them to function independently in their classrooms and in society in the future. To help me achieve my goal and accomplish my work as an ESL teacher, I have the WIDA (World Class Education Design and Assessment). North Carolina is part of the WIDA consortium of states dedicated to the design and implementation of standards and equitable educational opportunities for English students (ELs). As an ESL teacher, I use wida standards together with the Common Core State Standards to meet the language needs of ELs that are placed in the program based on an initial placement assessment; Assign ELs their appropriate accommodations and modifications based on their certain levels of proficiency; Ensure scaffolding instructions for ELs by supporting traditional classroom teachers in building and differentiating instructions and assessments. Undoubtedly, an immeasurable reward I find as an ESL teacher is to see my students achieve a high level of English proficiency and be able to function independently in basic instruction. So, blending my personal experiences as an EL with my obligations as an educator, I see the critical need and responsibility to serve as a defender of my students. So I use WIDA Can Do Descriptors! Can DO Descriptors provide a clear and basic overview of the ability of ELs based on initial or annual language proficiency testing. This powerful document highlights what our ELs CAN do at various stages of language development and for each language domain as they interact with the main content. I encourage you to take advantage of these valuable documents which, by the way, are free through the WIDA website. Even if your condition is not a wida state, these documents can be a great tool not only for you as an ESL teacher, but also for teachers, students and parents in the classroom! At the beginning of each school year, I gathered all the teachers from my school and went over ACCESS, DOs can, accommodations and modifications. For the teacher to buy, I make sure that my presentation is fun and engaging. I start by giving them the acronym 'ACCESS' (Assessment of Understanding and Communication in the English State) and they have to guess as a group what each letter The group that receives most of the correct letters gets a small prize! Teachers learn to read their students' language proficiency levels and use CAN Do name charts to map each at their corresponding proficiency level for each language domain. These are the name charts we use: Kindergarten, First Grade, Second-Third, Fourth-Fifth. Higher scores are also available on the WIDA website. Teachers understand that although students receive a score composed of proficiency, it is imperative to see what the student's strength and/or weakness is for better support during instruction. Teachers also receive this document that provides language accommodations that teachers can use to support the student access core without having to water the content. This other document is also useful as it provides Bloom Taxonomy issues differentiated by the level of language proficiency. This year I started sharing with my students not only their ACCESS scores, but also with the CAN DO Descriptors. I never thought how exciting that would be for all my students. They all loved looking at their scores and mapping their name at the appropriate proficiency level for each language domain. You could hear the students say, Look, I'm too loud to talk! or Look, I really need to work on my writing. Students received two highlights, one to highlight the current can do statements, and another to highlight the goal we set for the next school year. Your CAN DO chart is pasted into your daily notebook so that when we use them they can see you and be encouraged. Next school year, I'm going to use this student-friendly program. Not only are they colorful, but they're much better for them to read and understand. I believe, without a doubt, that students need to be explicitly taught the expectation we have of them from the beginning. My students understand that their teacher, their parents, and I know exactly what they can and cannot do. They have a clear understanding and a visual of where they are linguistically and where my goal is for them to be by the end of the school year. They know that I will report quarterly to teachers and parents how they are progressing toward their language proficiency goals. Karen's CAN Do chart Yes, you read this right... share it with your student's parents! CAN DO Descriptors are such a powerful tool for teachers and students that this year I decided to start sharing it with parents through a progress report format. Let me elaborate: When I receive access grades from my students, I analyze each student's data to determine their language goal in the school year. It's really about getting to know your students to better support them in the language domains they need most. For example: If Emily's ACCESS report states that she made a 3 in speaking, then her goal for the year would be to dominate the 3 and reach a 4. If she did a 2 in reading, her goal for the year would be a 3...so and on. If a student makes a 5 or 6, then there is no goal for that domain, since the student had shown mastery over the domain. A student can have 1 to 4 goals depending on their language proficiency. In order to have the support of parents in helping their child grow linguistically and academically, I give them a quarterly progress report that lets them know how they are throughout the year. Teachers can also receive this report if they want to see how their student is doing at ESL. I make the effort to honor my students' familiar language by translating their progress reports. Wida has descriptors available in Spanish if you want to use them! I know for sure that our parents would like to receive such a valuable document in their native language. Take a look at this example! Our county is fortunate to use ELLevation, an online platform that houses data information from our ELs and provides language strategies. It is through this platform that we can assign students' language goals and observe their progress. The elevation goal bank offers goals for newcomers too! This allows me to provide a report for students who are just entering the spectrum of language proficiency levels. It also gives me an idea of what I should be focusing on students who are new to the English language. These are the progress reports I use. Feel free to download, edit and use as you like. I'm not going to lie to you, it takes some work to put them together, but in the end, it's all worth it because you're providing accurate and useful information to your students, teachers, and parents. As you can see, there's so much we can get out of a document as valuable as the Can Descriptors! Now you know that not only is it a tool that we can use as ESL teachers to support the students we serve, but it can be so much more! Our students can do... Let's show them they can! If you're on Twitter, join us by posting ells success stories using #ELS_CAN so we can celebrate with you! **Updated 20/08/17 Added high school grades and esl high school progress reports Thanks for reading! This edition is organized around four comprehensive communicative purposes called Main Uses: Recount, Explanation, Argue Argument. Descriptors are organized by the following grade-level clusters, corresponding to ACCESS for ELLs and WIDA Screener. To purchase copies of the K-12 Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition that are printed and color linked, visit the WIDA Store. Early Years Can Make Descriptors provide examples of language use for three broad communicative purposes: Express Self, Recount, Inquire (for receptive and expressive linguistic domains). They are organized by the following age clusters: 2.5-3.5, 3.5-4.5, 4.5-5.5 To Copies of the Early Years Can Make Descriptors that are printed and linked in color, visit the WIDA Store. This original version does not use key uses as the organizer feature. Instead, organized by language domains: Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing, and by the following serial-level clusters: PreK-K, 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12. Every year, in classrooms across the country, the population of English students continues to grow. Depending on where you live and how far your school's ESL program is, you may have to figure out how to help non-English-speaking students participate in your class, even if you don't have ESL training. Unfortunately, many teachers in this situation will have only these students sitting there, watching as their classmates engage in learning activities. Or we can give students a coloring page, just so they have something to do with their hands. It's not even close to ideal—we know that—but without other tools at our disposal, what else is there? In a previous post, I shared 12 strategies that regular classroom teachers can use to support ESL students in their classrooms. If you haven't read this, definitely check it out. Since then, I have been shown another tool that can make a huge difference for these students: the Can-Do Descriptors, which can be downloaded for free from an organization called WIDA. These descriptors are designed to help classroom teachers understand what students at different levels of English proficiency should be able to do in a regular content area classroom. Tasks are separated into four domains: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Descriptors can help you look at an activity you plan to do with your English-speaking students, and then scale it back to ELL students so that they are still interacting with academic content, only on a simplified level. How Can-Do Descriptors Work works let's go through an example so you can see the can-do charts in action. Take a look at this page of descriptors for notes 9-12: WIDA Can-Do Descriptors for Reading and Writing, Grades 9-12. Level 1 is the lowest proficiency level and Level 6 is the highest. Suppose students write research reports that integrate information from multiple sources. If you look at the Writing line in the chart above, you will see that this activity is listed as something that a level 5 student should be able to do. Let's assume you have three ELL students in your class: Seda, who speaks almost no English (Level 1), Pavlo, whose English is progressing but has not yet reached proficiency (Level 3), and Ife, who is approaching fluency (Level 5). Ife can probably do the search report as assigned (see the top bullet in Writing at Level 5). She may need a little help with a little vocabulary, but at level 5, her proficiency is strong enough to do the same job as English-speaking colleagues. Pavlo, at Level 3, could receive a model or graphic organizer who asks for specific information about his chosen topic. To complete this model, he still needs to do research, but he doesn't have to rely on the advanced English skills needed to write a well-written report. Meanwhile, The Seda may only be able to label photos of items related to a theme similar to what students are researching. If all students are researching careers, for example, you can find out what types of jobs Seda is interested in, have her choose one, then give her photos related to that job to look up and label. Here's another example of 3rd grade teacher Kelsey Davis using the 3-5 descriptors: What if you don't have access scores? The levels in these charts are based on students' grades in the ACCESS test, which is given in many states to measure English proficiency. If your state does not use this test, if you are outside the US, or if you are working with a student who has not yet been tested, use these charts as a guideline: The point is to use the descriptors to challenge each student as much as possible within their current language skills, then make your best guess about what the student may be able to do , try and adjust as needed. It's better than having them sitting and colorful. ♦ Download a free copy of wida can-descriptors for your target age group HERE. And check back later: WIDA is currently working on additional versions of the descriptors, including a set in Spanish. Come back for more. Join our mailing list and get weekly tips, tools and inspiration that will make your teaching more effective and fun. You'll have access to our members-only library of free downloads, including 20 ways to halve your rating time, the electronic booklet that helped thousands of teachers save time in sorting. More than 50,000 teachers have already joined—join.

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