



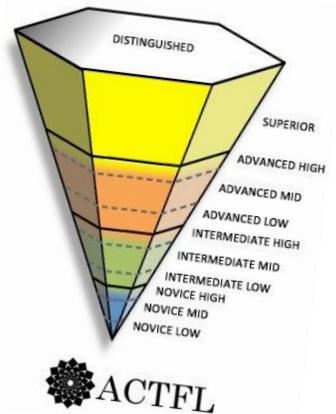
Proficiency for Parents

Westerly Public Schools * FLES Program * www.westerly.k12.ri.us

What is Proficiency?

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages adapted Government Language Skill Descriptions for the U.S. academic community. Now in its third edition, schools and teachers are shifting their focus from what students know in or about a foreign language to what they can do with what they know. These standards have been further drilled down for K-12 use making up the Performance Descriptors. The ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners are designed to describe language performance that is the result of explicit instruction in an instructional setting. There are two main benefits to using the Performance Descriptors for Language Learners:

1. They help language educators create performance tasks targeted to the appropriate performance range, while challenging learners to also use strategies from the next higher range. These Performance Descriptors also help educators set realistic expectations at the summative assessment level.
2. Language learners benefit by understanding the ranges of performance, which describe a pathway for learners to keep track of progress made, to identify domains needing additional practice, and to gain a clear understanding of how to move into the next higher range of performance.



Proficiency Scale

Advanced (Advanced Low, Advanced Mid, Advanced High)

Speakers at the Advanced level engage in conversation to communicate information on personal topics, as well as topics of community, national, or international interest. The topics are handled concretely in the major time frames of past, present, and future. These speakers can also deal with a social studies with an unexpected complication. The language of Advanced-level speakers is abundant and they usually speak in paragraphs.

Intermediate (Intermediate Low, Intermediate Mid, Intermediate High)

Speakers at the Intermediate level can create with language when talking about familiar topics related to their daily life. They are able to recombine learned material in order to express personal meaning. Intermediate-level speakers can ask simple questions and can handle a straightforward survival situation. They produce sentence-level language, ranging from discrete sentences to strings of sentences, typically in present time.

Novice (Novice Low, Novice Mid, Novice High)

Novice-level speakers can communicate short messages on highly predictable, everyday topics that affect them directly. They do so primarily through the use of isolated words and phrases that have been encountered, memorized, and recalled. Novice-level speakers may be difficult to understand even by the

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most sympathetic listeners accustomed to non-native speech.

The Numbers...

- ❖ In Westerly, students in grades K-4 at Dunn's Corners Elementary, State Street School and Springbrook Elementary have lessons in Spanish for 40 minutes at a time every other week for one semester a year (6 hours of instructional time total). Students in grades K-4 at Bradford Elementary have lessons in Spanish for 40 minutes once a week for one semester a year (12 hours of instructional time total).
- ❖ According to ACTFL (The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages), students need about 65 hours of instructional time in order to reach a proficiency level of Novice Low, another 65 hours to reach Novice Mid and yet another 65 to reach Novice High. Therefore, the FLES Program in Westerly currently sets Novice Low as a proficiency target for all students who are learning Spanish as their second language.

How students benefit...

Research shows numerous benefits for children who study a foreign language at an early age:

- ❖ Students exhibit greater cognitive development in areas such as flexibility, creativity, divergent thinking and higher order thinking skills.
- ❖ Students achieve higher scores on standardized tests in reading, language arts and mathematics.
- ❖ Students develop a sense of cultural diversity, openness to and appreciation of other cultures.
- ❖ Students learn and excel at pronunciation.
- ❖ Students develop connections in the brain that promote efficient language learning.
- ❖ Students demonstrate enhanced listening and memory skills.
- ❖ Students have an improved sense of self and achievement in school.
- ❖ Students can achieve intermediate levels of language fluency in high school and college.

How can you help your language learner?

While you may not speak the language your student is learning, you can still help! Try one or all of the following to ensure your students' success!

- ❖ Expose your children to people from varied language and cultural background.
- ❖ Participate in events where language and cultural diversity are celebrated.
- ❖ If you speak a language other than English, use it with your children.
- ❖ Speak positively to your children about the value of learning another language.
- ❖ Provide music, videos and books in other languages.
- ❖ Send your children to summer language camps.
- ❖ Investigate opportunities for formal language study for your children, beginning as early as preschool and extending through their high school years.

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