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# Accommodating Accommodations: How a Small Liberal Arts College Certification Program Redefines the New ELL State Mandates

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# Accommodating Accommodations: How a Small Liberal Arts College Certification Program Redefines the New ELL State Mandates

## **Keywords**

liberal arts education, education, ELL state mandate, academic accommodations

## **Disciplines**

Curriculum and Instruction | Disability and Equity in Education | Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research | Gifted Education | Higher Education and Teaching | Special Education and Teaching

# Accommodating Accommodations: How a Small Liberal Arts College Certification Program Redefines the New ELL State Mandates

Greetings! In a continued effort to share best practices from our colleagues, I have asked Brent Talbot and Kaoru Miyazawa from Gettysburg College to share their work on the ELL mandates. Thank you to Brent and Kaoru for their time and hard work!

—Kim Council

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* brought back English only policies in American public schools, replacing Title VII (Bilingual Education Act) from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1968) with Title III (English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act) from the NCLB Act (2001). Due to this change, federal funding for developmental bilingual education, whose goal was for students to become fluent in both their native language and English, was eliminated (Ovando, Collier, & Combs, 2003).

NCLB requires all schools in states that receive federal funding to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of ESL (English as a Second Language) students in science, math, language arts and English as a second language. To ensure steady academic and linguistic progress of ESL students, the Pennsylvania Department of Education in 2007 adopted the standards and assessment tools developed by the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment, known as WIDA. WIDA provides ELL (English Language Learning) standards, assessment tools, and strategies to modify classroom instruction appropriate in helping ESL students acquire the academic content and the English language (<http://www.wida.us/>).

In 2008, a document titled, *Accommodations and Adaptations for Students with Disabilities in an Inclusive Setting and Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners Program Guidelines*, mandated that all instructional and educational specialist preparation programs in the Commonwealth include the following by January 1, 2011:

1. At least 9 credits or 270 hours regarding accommodations and adaptations for students with disabilities in an inclusive setting (instruction and literacy skills development and cognitive skill development for students with disabilities must be included); and
2. At least 3 credits or 90 hours regarding the instructional needs of English language learners. (22 PA Code, Chapter 49 §49.13(b) (relating to policies)).

In addition, Chapter 49.13(b) requires higher education institutions to train preservice teachers how to accommodate instruction for English Language Learners in multiple classroom settings through the WIDA performance standards and Model Performance Indicators (MPI). The English Language Development Standards (ELDS) developed by WIDA are listed as: *Social and Instructional Language, Language of Language Arts, Language of Mathematics, Language of Science and Language of Social Studies*. This model initially marginalized music education for not including music as an *ELDS*, but recent standard updates now address *Language of Music and Performing Arts* along with *Language of Multiculturalism, Language of Visual Arts, Language of Health and Physical Education and Language of Technology and Engineering* as “Complementary Strands” within the model. Though music is marginalized as a complementary strand, the recent efforts begin to recognize that music classes are indeed sites for English language acquisition for ESL students, and thus suggests all music teachers facilitate language development among ESL students.

In responding to Chapter 49.13(b), the Education Department at Gettysburg College created a 3 credit hour course titled, “Language, Culture, and Immigration,” in which all ELL related competencies are covered in one semester. All preservice teachers, regardless of certificate type, take this course in the first two years of their program. Learning how to use the WIDA model to assess ESL students’ proficiency as well as to accommodate instruction based on their proficiency level is a significant component of this course. After teaching this course for a few semesters, we found many overlaps between strategies promoted by the WIDA curriculum and those that are commonly used by strong teachers. For example, the WIDA model suggests teachers use language supports (seen in the following figure) to modify instruction for ESL students.

Figure K: Examples of Sensory, Graphic, and Interactive Supports

Sensory Supports	Graphic Supports	Interactive Supports
Real-life objects (realla)	Charts	In pairs or partners
Manipulatives	Graphic organizers	In triads or small groups
Pictures & photographs	Tables	In a whole group
Illustrations, diagrams, & drawings	Graphs	Using cooperative group structures
Magazines & newspapers	Timelines	With the Internet (websites) or software programs
Physical activities	Number lines	In the native language (L1)
Videos & films		With mentors
Broadcasts		
Models & figures		

The above supports are not only beneficial for ESL students, but are good for all learners. As one teacher points out in this January's edition of *Teaching Music*, "[ESL strategies are incorporated] into my lessons even when there are no ESL students in my class...It helps all students achieve higher-order thinking and communication skills" (Moore, 2013, p.57). Included in the above supports, are visual images, graphic organizers, and partner work that are a natural part of many formal music learning environments. For example, consider the musical score as an illustration or diagram; consider the instrument on which one performs as a real-life object or manipulative; or consider the *YouTube* music videos--so many of our students listen to--as a "Video & Film" or a "Broadcast". All of these examples are listed as Sensory Supports within the WIDA model.

Graphic Supports (seen in column two) are commonly found in many music classrooms as well. Graphic organizers are used often in general music classrooms to help guide a listening activity; timelines are commonly used in reference to music history lessons. Score analysis could even be considered a graphic support. In addition, Interactive Supports (seen in column three) are integral to most musical contexts. Consider the amount of partner work that occurs in a general music class; or consider quartet or octet voice checks during choir rehearsals. These, along with chamber music ensembles, pull-out lessons, sectionals, and full group rehearsing, are all types of interactive supports.

WIDA provides teachers another helpful tool called "CAN DO Descriptors."

The CAN DO Descriptors chart presents concrete examples of tasks ESL students--at a particular level of English proficiency--can perform in classroom settings. Teachers can refer to this chart to estimate their students' abilities and progress in English Language Learning. This chart is especially helpful for those who have never interacted with ESL students in the past. Some might be concerned that this concise presentation of ESL students' abilities could lead to a fixed view of ESL students; however, the WIDA model does warn teachers not to solely depend on this chart to assess their students' abilities. Notice in the fine print on the bottom of the chart, that the WIDA model asks teachers to consider the variabilities of each learner's "cognitive development due to age, grade level spans, their diversity of educational experiences and diagnosed learning disabilities."

WIDA's stance in acknowledging multiple factors that affect ESL students' performance is significant. Our program values this stance, but encourages preservice teachers to further their thinking by considering each ESL student's socio-cultural and historical contexts as well. It is our hope that preservice teachers will acknowledge, 1) that all learners' abilities are contextualized and, 2) that any process of accommodating instruction is inherently tied to privilege and power (Foucault, 1980). Our decision to emphasize this stance is rooted in our commitment to critical pedagogy (Apple, 1982; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1997; Hooks, Illich, 1971; McLaren, 1994, 1999; Postman & Weingartner, 1971) in music education (Abrahams 2004, 2005; Allsup, 2004; Regelski, 1998, 2004; Lamb, 1996). Critical pedagogy, 1) recognizes that knowledge is shaped by power and is political by nature, 2) views knowledge as an emerging process

of inquiry with the world and with each other, 3) acknowledges that all students' are knowledge-bearers, and 4) views teachers and students as co-constructors of knowledge and active agents for change.

As Freire (1971) states, "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry [we] pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 72). At the heart of this pedagogy is the concept of praxis, which assumes that knowledge is formed through our collaborative action.

Figure 5M: CAN DO Descriptors for the Levels of English Language Proficiency, PreK-12

For the given level of English language proficiency, with support, English language learners can:

	Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Beginning	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging
LISTENING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Point to stated pictures, words, phrases</li> <li>Follow one-step oral directions</li> <li>Match oral statements to objects, figures or illustrations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sort pictures, objects according to oral instructions</li> <li>Follow two-step oral directions</li> <li>Match information from oral descriptions to objects, illustrations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locate, select, order information from oral descriptions</li> <li>Follow multi-step oral directions</li> <li>Categorize or sequence oral information using pictures, objects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare/contrast functions, relationships from oral information</li> <li>Analyze and apply oral information</li> <li>Identify cause and effect from oral discourse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draw conclusions from oral information</li> <li>Construct models based on oral discourse</li> <li>Make connections from oral discourse</li> </ul>
SPEAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name objects, people, pictures</li> <li>Answer WH- (who, what, when, where, which) questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask WH- questions</li> <li>Describe pictures, events, objects, people</li> <li>Restate facts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formulate hypotheses, make predictions</li> <li>Describe processes, procedures</li> <li>Retell stories or events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss stories, issues, concepts</li> <li>Give speeches, oral reports</li> <li>Offer creative solutions to issues, problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in debates</li> <li>Explain phenomena, give examples and justify responses</li> <li>Express and defend points of view</li> </ul>
READING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match icons and symbols to words, phrases or environmental print</li> <li>Identify concepts about print and text features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locate and classify information</li> <li>Identify facts and explicit messages</li> <li>Select language patterns associated with facts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sequence pictures, events, processes</li> <li>Identify main ideas</li> <li>Use context clues to determine meaning of words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret information or data</li> <li>Find details that support main ideas</li> <li>Identify word families, figures of speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct research to glean information from multiple sources</li> <li>Draw conclusions from explicit and implicit text</li> </ul>
WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Label objects, pictures, diagrams</li> <li>Draw in response to a prompt</li> <li>Produce icons, symbols, words, phrases to convey messages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make lists</li> <li>Produce drawings, phrases, short sentences, notes</li> <li>Give information requested from oral or written directions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce bare-bones expository or narrative texts</li> <li>Compare/contrast information</li> <li>Describe events, people, processes, procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarize information from graphics or notes</li> <li>Edit and revise writing</li> <li>Create original ideas or detailed responses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply information to new contexts</li> <li>React to multiple genres and discourses</li> <li>Author multiple formal/genres of writing</li> </ul>

Level 6: Reading

Variability of students' cognitive development due to age, grade level spans, their diversity of educational experiences and diagnosed learning disabilities (if applicable) are to be considered in using this information

(continued on page 40)

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Our Chapter 49.13(b) course, "Language, Culture, and Immigration," embraces the four tenets of critical pedagogy listed above. In order to address the political nature of knowledge, our students examine the effect of education and language policies on language minorities. For example, we explore how NCLB's shift to an English only policy dismisses the value of the cultural and linguistic resources possessed by ESL students. Furthermore, we examine how such a policy shapes the power relationship between teachers (who are mostly native speakers of English) and ESL students. To expand on our inquiry in the classroom, preservice teachers engage in meaningful fieldwork. Our program partners with area organizations and local schools that provide tutoring and ESL instruction for students of all ages (kindergarten-adults). Preservice teachers work one-on-one with ESL students, forming personal relationships. Through this process, preservice teachers' views of ESL students actively change. They begin to see ESL students as knowledge bearers; and understand, that ESL students have voice and agency and make meaningful contributions to our communities (Blommaert, 2005).

Based on our belief that all stakeholders can co-construct knowledge and be agents of change, we ask preservice teachers to 1) design lessons that draw upon the shared linguistic and cultural resources of ESL students; and 2) develop responsive action plans based on their "real-life" needs. For example, one past action plan demonstrated ways to help both ESL mothers and their children gain access to and utilize local services like the library. While these learning experiences are valuable and benefit stakeholders, they still do not go far enough in addressing issues of privilege. Through the lens of critical pedagogy, we recognize that, even with the best of intentions, our preservice teachers remain in a position of power in their relationship to ESL students. Without experiencing what it is like to be positioned as a minority or second language learner, preservice teachers are unable to develop a full understanding of the social, cultural, and psychological contexts that impact student learning.

We have found that preservice teachers design and integrate more meaningful instructional accommodations for language learners when they are placed in an environment where they are a minority. To facilitate this, we designed a summer abroad experience for preservice teachers in education that focuses on empathy. By living in Bali, Indonesia, preservice teachers experience what it is like to be taught music and art forms by instructors whose primary language is not English. They observe how these instructors negotiate cultural identities and language when working with people outside their own culture. Preservice teachers observe and reflect on their own process of language acquisition and cultural adaptation. They consider what accommodations are essential for them to learn in this new environment. Like

our Chapter 49.13(b) course on campus, preservice teachers draw upon empirical and theoretical studies from sociology, psychology, anthropology, and ethnomusicology that address issues of ESL students' social, cultural, and psychological adaptation processes. In Bali, they use this new experience and body of knowledge to design and teach English and Music lessons to Balinese students in elementary and secondary schools. It is our goal by the end of this experience, that preservice teachers are able to draw upon their experiences as second language and second music learners to develop more meaningful instruction in their future classrooms.

Our journey to adopt state mandates in a program that embraces critical pedagogy has been a complex and creative process. As we redefined the new ELL state mandates we came to recognize that: 1) all classes, including music, are sites for English language acquisition, 2) all teachers facilitate language development, 3) ESL strategies are beneficial for all learners, 4) all students, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, are knowledge bearers, and 5) students and teachers co-construct knowledge through collaborative actions. In this way, language moves beyond being merely a tool for gaining access to content knowledge. Instead, it becomes central to the process of change--able to empower us to transform the way we engage with each other and with our world.

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## Glossary:

**AYP:** Adequate Yearly Progress

### CHAPTER 49.13(b)

1. At least 9 credits or 270 hours regarding accommodations and adaptations for students with disabilities in an inclusive setting (instruction in literacy skills development and cognitive skill development for students with disabilities must be included); and

2. At least 3 credits or 90 hours regarding the instructional needs of English language learners. (22 PA Code, Chapter 49, §49.13(b) (relating to policies)).

The evaluation by the Department will provide assurance that, on or before January 1, 2011, teacher education programs will require at least 9 credits or 270 hours, or an equivalent combination thereof, regarding accommodations and adaptations for students with disabilities in an inclusive setting. Within the content of these 9 credits or 270 hours, instruction in literacy skills development and cognitive skill development for students with disabilities must be included, as determined by the institution. At least 3 credits or 90 additional hours, or an equivalent combination thereof, must address the instructional needs of English language learners. For purposes of this requirement, 1 credit equals 30 hours of coursework. Applicable hours are limited to a combination of seat hours of classroom instruction, field observation experiences, major research assignments, and development and implementation of lesson plans with accommodations and adaptations for diverse learners in an inclusive setting. (22 Pa. Code §49.13(4)(i)).

**ELLs:** English Language Learners

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**Model Performance Indicators (MPI):** an individual cell within the English language proficiency matrix that is descriptive of a specific level of English language proficiency for a language domain.

**NCLB:** No Child Left Behind

**WIDA:** World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment <http://wida.us/index.aspx>



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