






Beyond the Surface: Stages of Language Acquisition

Dr. Stephen Krashen describes how multilingual learners naturally move through five stages of acquiring a second language. Knowing these stages and how they align with WIDA English Language Development Levels, helps every educator support student success, even without a background in ESOL or linguistics.

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Student Expression</u>	<u>WIDA Level</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>	<u>Teacher Tip</u>
 Pre-Production	Listening, minimal speaking	Level 1	A few weeks to months	Use visuals + gestures
 Early Production	One/two-word phrases	Level 1–2	Few months	Praise efforts and provide structure
 Speech Emergence	Simple sentences, basic communication	Level 2–3	6 months – 2 years	Encourage sentence expansion, ask open-ended questions
 Intermediate Fluency	Complex sentences, ideas, and opinions	Level 3–4	1–3 years	Scaffold for deeper thinking, use academic language
 Advanced Fluency	Near-native use of academic language	Level 4–5	3–7 years	Focus on academic tasks, complex vocabulary

WIDA English Language Development Standards will guide student success.

- ✓ **Set realistic expectations**
- ✓ **Focus on strengths, not just errors**
- ✓ **Use Individual Language Access Plans**
- ✓ **Celebrate every step forward!**
- ✓ **Collaborate with your Director/Coordinator of ML Programs**

