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*“Developing scaffolded language learning targets and exploring the connection between language learning targets and formative assessment components will be the hallmark of the FLARE assessment model.”*

**WHAT'S INSIDE**

FLARE Formative Assessment Model	2
Formative Assessment Best Practices	2
Definitions	2
FLARE Professional Development	3
FLARE Professional Development Materials	3
FLARE's Mission	4
District Commitment	4
References	4
Contact Information	4

**What Do We Know About Formative Assessment for English Language Learners and How Do We Develop a System Accordingly?**

Prior to 2002, language proficiency assessments used in most states to identify and reclassify English Language Learners (ELLs) were based on outdated theories of language learning and were often long past meaningful use. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), several federal and private grants funded the development of new ELL assessments by multistate consortia. Four consortia emerged from this round of grants (Abedi, 2007). Currently, two of the four remain: English Language Development Assessment (ELDA) and World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA).

Substantial progress has been made in the development of large-scale ELL assessments as a result of these grants. We are now beginning to understand how these measures affect state and local ELL programs. We are expanding our understanding of academic English language proficiency, especially as it is manifested on large-scale assessments. However, little has been done—and, in fact, little is known—about formative assessments in the ELL context (McKay, 2005). Many researchers have espoused the value of formative assessments (e.g., Popham, 1995, Stiggins, 2005; Shepard, 2006). Others have argued that the quality of formative assessments, especially teacher-developed classroom assessments, could be greatly improved (Stiggins, 2001; McMillan, 2001, 2003; Brookhart, 2003). There is great need for effective, easily implemented formative assessment models in elementary and second-

dary educational contexts, and specifically for ELL educators and educational systems.

The information collected from Formative Language Assessment Records for ELLs (FLARE) assessments will greatly aid teaching and learning for ELLs generally and implementation of standards-based ELP formative assessments for ELLs specifically. The validity and comparability studies outlined in this proposal will clarify the efficacy and value of such assessment systems and models and the relationship between ELP formative and summative instruments and state-level content assessments.

*“By its very nature, learning involves progression. . . . Yet, despite the plethora of standards and curricula, many teachers are unclear about how learning progresses in specific domains. This is an undesirable situation for teaching and learning, and one that particularly affects teachers’ ability to engage in formative assessment”* (Heritage, 2008, p. 1).

Taking Heritage’s statement to heart, the FLARE project will provide guidance to teachers on students’ learning progress in a specific, targeted, measurable way, and it will include the instruments to measure that learning process, thereby supporting the success of students and teachers. Developing scaffolded language learning targets and exploring the connection between language learning targets and formative assessment components will be the hallmark of the FLARE assessment model. FLARE will incorporate student learning with formative evaluation of that learning process.

**FLARE Development Team:** Key project personnel include H. Gary Cook, Ph.D., Principal Investigator; Paula White, Ph.D., FLARE Project Manager; Tim Boals, Ph.D., WIDA Executive Director; M. Elizabeth Cranley, Ph.D., WIDA Associate Director; Mariana Castro, WIDA Professional Development Manager; Margo Gottlieb, Ph.D., WIDA Lead Developer; Margaret Malone, Ph.D., Center for Applied Linguistics, and Lorraine Valdez Pierce, Ph.D., George Mason University.

## FLARE Formative Assessment Model

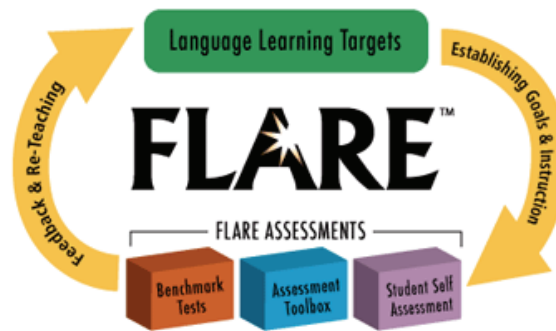
### Definitions

*Assessment:* a sampling of student behavior for the purpose of making an inference.

*Formative Assessment:* an ongoing assessment process that provides students and teachers with feedback on progress toward instructional goals.

*Interim Assessment:* a periodic assessment that provides students, parents and educators with information on unit attainment or progress across units.

*Summative Assessment:* an occasional (often annual) assessment that provides parents, educators, and policymakers with information on course/standards attainment or progress.

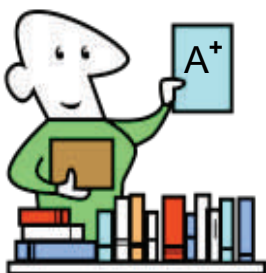


*Assessment frameworks* are at the center of this model. These frameworks are scaffolded language learning expectations developed from WIDA’s middle and high school grade level clusters of the English language proficiency standards, ACT’s College Readiness Standards, NAEP’s U.S. History and Geography Frameworks, and Achieve’s American Diploma Program (ADP). In a very real sense, this is a standards-referenced formative assessment. The assessment frameworks are being used to create *language learning targets* and *FLARE assessments*. In this model, teachers identify the language learning targets for each level of English language appropriate for students at specific levels of proficiency. Typically, students’ initial proficiency levels are determined by a screening assessment such as the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT)<sup>™</sup> or the results of large-scale or local ELL assessments. Instruction occurs relative to those targets, and students are assessed on their progress toward meeting goals with three types of measures: (a) *benchmark tests*, (b) a compendium of classroom-based, teacher selected assessment templates called the *assessment toolbox*, and (c) *student self-assessments*. Based on feedback from assessment results, re-teaching of targets may be required, or students may progress to higher level learning targets.

### Formative Assessment Best Practices

Based on the existing research, a list of best practices in the development and use of formative assessments can be created. Formative assessments should:

1. Be of sound technical quality;
2. Be an ongoing, classroom-based process that is embedded in instruction;
3. Focus students on learning goals;
4. Provide examples of good work;
5. Identify students’ current skills and abilities;
6. Highlight gaps in student learning and provide directions for addressing those gaps;
7. Seamlessly integrate with external standards and summative assessments;
8. Be dynamic enough to accommodate classroom realities (e.g., be easily administered, account for disruptions, adjust to student heterogeneity), yet uniform in data collection, interpretation, and reporting; and
9. Incorporate a rigorous, sustained professional development program for teachers.



## FLARE Professional Development

### Year 1(2009): Two-day summer institute

- Day 1:* What is literacy and what is the impact of Second Language Assessment Literacy?
- Day 2:* How do formative assessments fit into a balanced assessment system and how can formative assessments be used in the ELL classroom?

### Year 2 (2010): Four-day summer institute

- Day 1:* How to use the FLARE language learning targets and assessments
- Day 2:* What are the signs of language literacy progress?
- Day 3:* How to use the language learning plan and how to guide students in self-reflection, self-assessment, and goal setting
- Day 4:* How to assess the linguistic components and how to use FLARE scoring materials, scoring forms, and reports

### Year 3 (2011): Three-day summer institute

- Day 1:* How to use the FLARE assessment tools and reporting forms to diagnose students' strengths, needs, and guidance on setting language learning goals to be articulated in the Language Learning Plan
- Day 2:* Revisit the use of FLARE assessment tools and also provide training on how to use materials to set language learning goals for the linguistic components: language functions, vocabulary, grammar, and language discourse
- Day 3:* Examples and guidelines for collaborating with content teachers (e.g., science and mathematics)



## FLARE Professional Development Materials in Development

1. A presentation with associated materials introducing and providing an overview of FLARE.
2. A presentation with associated materials on using the Language Learning Targets and setting goals based on the targets.
3. FLARE benchmark assessment's administration, scoring, reporting, and interpretive guides.
4. FLARE assessment toolbox's administration, scoring, reporting, and interpretive guides.
5. A presentation and guide for the Student Self-Assessments and Language Learning Plans.
6. FLARE Native Language Literacy Screener's administration, scoring, reporting and interpretive guide.
7. A presentation on how ELL formative assessment fits into a district's balanced assessment system for ELLs.
8. A guide to using FLARE reports, using of FLARE assessment data, and using the language learning plan, and potentially in the future a guide to using FLARE's online reporting system.
9. A FLARE Handbook which will be a compendium of all FLARE training materials and sample templates, rubrics, and anchor papers.
10. A guide on college readiness standards and the academic language required by standards by subject area.



**Wisconsin Center For  
Education Research  
(WCER)**

UW-Madison  
1025 W. Johnson Street  
Madison, WI 53706

Phone: 608-263-1564

E-mail:  
info@flareassessment.org

**Partner Districts:**

**Charlotte-  
Mecklenburg**  
www.cms.k12.nc.us

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## FLARE's Mission

FLARE's mission is to promote educational equity and academic achievement for linguistically and culturally diverse students through the development and dissemination of curricular, instructional, and assessment products and resources. FLARE is funded by a three year grant (2009-2011) by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The FLARE project encompasses the following four key goals and objectives:

- To pioneer a formative assessment model for English Language Learners (ELLs) in the middle and high school grades using best practices.
- To develop valid and reliable formative measures of students' progress in academic English language proficiency and to support and expand English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual teachers' capacity to evaluate their students.
- To improve the learning and achievement of ELL students and to provide teachers with practical tools for keeping ELLs on track for academic success and post secondary opportunities.
- To provide the necessary materials and training to support the effective implementation of formative assessments in ELL classrooms.

## District Commitment

FLARE cannot be developed without the full commitment and support of participating districts and schools. At each of three participating school districts, five middle and high schools will serve as FLARE development sites. Development sites will have sufficient populations of ELL students to make piloting and field testing of FLARE materials meaningful. Approximately 30 teachers and the principal from each participating school will participate in FLARE professional development activities during the summer or school year (two days in the first year, four in the second, and three in the third). We believe that participating districts' students, teachers and administrators will benefit from this project, especially in the area of formative assessment, and their open and full participation will directly relate to the project's success. **The most important benefit that districts will receive as a result of participating in the FLARE program is trained and effective teachers who are able to implement and sustain institutional change through the use of the FLARE formative assessments.** Through the systemic change that will occur, it is expected that English language learners will demonstrate improved performance on local and large scale assessments.

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