



# **Supporting English Language Learners with Limited Prior Schooling**

A practical guide for Ontario educators

**Grades 3 to 12**



reach every student



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# Introduction

The increasing diversity in Ontario schools presents an array of challenges and opportunities to educators. This resource attempts to demystify some of the challenges, and highlight strategies that educators may use to create possibilities and opportunities for English language learners with limited prior schooling. Like all students in Ontario, English language learners with limited prior schooling should receive the support they need in order to realize their potential and be equipped for life long learning. It takes a whole school and a whole school system to do this effectively. The inclusive and thoughtful school offers a welcoming place to everyone.

Very little Canadian research exists about a small subgroup of English language learners (ELLs) with limited prior schooling, yet these students are in Canadian classrooms and will continue to arrive on an ongoing basis. This resource offers background information about these learners, who have significant gaps in their formal education. Demographics change over time as different groups of people migrate to Canada. Although the countries of origin change and individual experiences will vary, recognizing and programming for students' educational needs will continue to be central to their successful transition to Ontario schools and to Canadian society.

Throughout the resource, there are suggestions for educators about how to address these learners' needs, in schools and boards where there are many English language learners with limited prior schooling and in those where there are only a few.

Student portraits present an authentic picture of English language learners with limited prior schooling in Ontario classrooms. As educators read each of these examples, they are encouraged to think about the information - how it relates to the English language learners in their classes and schools and how they can use it to support these learners.

In preparing this resource, the Ministry of Education acknowledges the valuable work being done in schools and classrooms across Ontario, and the dedication of teachers throughout the province in creating an inclusive learning environment that supports the success of every student.

The term *parent* is used throughout this document to refer to the legal guardian of any student under 18 years of age.





# The English language learner with limited prior schooling

## CONTEXT

- Every English language learner with limited prior schooling can learn and be successful when given appropriate supports and opportunities.
- ELLs with limited prior schooling can thrive in a school where everyone has a shared understanding of their backgrounds, and where all educators share a vision of high expectations for every student.
- Every ELL with limited prior schooling needs to see himself or herself as a learner, with a place and a contribution to make in the classroom and the school community.
- Due to their limited prior education, these students will often require more time than most English language learners to achieve academic proficiency.

We must first comprehend the fact that children – all children – come to school motivated to enlarge their culture. But we must start with their culture ... and look first to determine how they seek to know themselves and others and how their expertise and experience can be used as the fuel to fire their interests, knowledge, and skills ... for they are rich in assets. As teachers, we enter their world in order to aid them and to build bridges between two cultures.

Eugene Garcia, 1999, p. 82

## English language learners with limited prior schooling

English language learners with limited prior schooling come to Ontario schools from a variety of life situations and experiences. While their individual circumstances are unique, they have not had the opportunity to attend school on a regular and consistent basis or may have had no schooling at all. These students have significant gaps in their learning and have had limited opportunities to develop age-appropriate language and literacy skills even in their first language.

- **Farah**, 13, is from a rural area in Afghanistan, where she never had the opportunity to go to school or develop literacy skills in her first language, Pashto. She is in Grade 7 and needs intensive ELD instruction, combined with key concepts and skills from the elementary curriculum, to accelerate her literacy development and build the skills necessary for her transition to secondary school after Grade 8.
- **Esila**, 10, was born in Chechnya. Her first language is Chechen. Her family fled the conflict and spent two years in Europe seeking asylum. She attended school sporadically for two years in her home country but had no formal schooling while in transit. Esila is in Grade 4 but her reading and writing skills are limited.
- **Hector**, 12, has had interrupted school attendance since he arrived in Grade 4. His first language is Spanish. He spends at least part of each year in Mexico with his family, who are migrant workers. His everyday oral English skills are close to his English-speaking age peers, however he needs an intensive ELD program to accelerate his literacy and numeracy development.
- **Efua**, 17, was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Her first language is Lingala. She attended school for four years there. Her parents sought refuge in Germany because of political instability in their home country. While there, Efua attended school where the language of instruction was German. Seeking a permanent home, her family came to Canada. Efua speaks Lingala and some German. An initial assessment indicates that Efua has foundational literacy and numeracy skills that will support her success in an accelerated program.

The English language learners described above are only some examples of the many ELLs with limited prior schooling who are transitioning into Ontario's schools. They are adjusting to school, its routines and expectations, and doing so with limited knowledge and skill in the English language. Classroom teachers, ESL/ELD teachers, and school and board administrators want to know how best to meet the needs of these students as individuals and as members of the school and broader community.

## Program support

English language learners with limited prior schooling require English Literacy Development (ELD) programs, which combine language learning with accelerated literacy development. Students who require ELD support in English will likely require ELD support in all subject/curriculum areas. Given the appropriate support and instruction in literacy development, ELLs with limited prior schooling can transition from ELD to ESL programs. Over varying lengths of time, ELLs will develop the level of English proficiency that supports academic success and full integration into mainstream programs.

ELD and ESL are distinct programs.

School boards will implement programs and services that will enable English language learners to continue their education while learning English. If initial assessment indicates that an English language learner has had limited prior schooling, the board will provide additional support to the student.

**English Literacy Development (ELD)** programs are for students whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools. Students in these programs are most often from countries in which their access to education has been limited, and they have had limited opportunities to develop language and literacy skills in any language. Schooling in their countries of origin has been inconsistent, disrupted, or even completely unavailable throughout the years that these children would otherwise have been in school. As a result, they arrive in Ontario schools with significant gaps in their education.

**English as a Second Language (ESL)** programs are for students whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools. Students in these programs have had educational opportunities to develop age-appropriate first-language literacy skills.

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.5.1 and 2.3.2.*

Students with limited prior schooling arrive in Ontario classrooms at all ages, and bring with them varying levels of first language literacy. Some students have attended school, while others may never have attended. Students have a range of oral English proficiency – some with little or no English, others with considerable oral English proficiency – and others have varieties of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools.

Students' needs may also extend beyond schooling. Some families may have experienced great difficulties, and may still carry the burden of separation and loss. International organizations report that significant numbers of refugees come from situations involving conflict and trauma. As well, issues such as unresolved asylum claims, financial hardships, limited facility with English, outstanding health issues, and the isolation and the newness of their lives in Ontario present daily challenges. They require many supports to rebuild their lives. At the same time, they are survivors. They often display incredible resilience and adaptability.

ELLs with limited prior schooling lack academic experiences, but not life experiences. They bring a richness of international understanding and experience that enhance the education of the entire school community. Their need for intensive literacy and language support programs is balanced by the cultural and linguistic capital that they bring with them. They are likely to bring curiosity about their new country and very little experience with school routines and expectations. While students may have had little formal schooling, they have acquired other knowledge and learning, and have strengths which are as yet unidentified. Educators who value and build on that prior knowledge and experience help these students succeed in school.

English is an international language, and many varieties of English – sometimes referred to as dialects – are spoken around the world. Standard English is the variety of English that is used as the language of education, law, and government in English-speaking countries. Some varieties of English are very different – not only in pronunciation or accent but also in vocabulary and sentence structure – from the English required for success in Ontario schools. Some varieties are so different from standard English that many linguists consider them to be languages in their own right.

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 1.2.*

## Factors affecting English language learners with limited prior schooling

**Adjustment factors**

- My parents brought us here so that we could have a chance for a better future.
- I want to become Canadian without losing who I am.
- I am learning that a variety of people can live together peacefully, even though they may disagree or have different beliefs.
- I am getting used to speaking to and sitting beside people of the opposite sex.
- I'm hopeful about the possibilities of my life in Canada.

**Affective factors**

- I'm scared when I see that my parents are also afraid.
- I am adaptable, independent, and resilient.
- I know how to cook and feed my family, but food here is so different.
- I am responsible for the care of my younger siblings.
- My family depends on my income for basic necessities.

**English language learner with limited prior schooling****Academic factors**

- I have so much to say, but I can only say it in my first language.
- My teacher is as foreign to me as I am to him (or her).
- I want to learn how to read and write like other people my age.
- I always wanted to go to school.
- I wish I could show more about what I understand so my teacher would know I am smart.

## Understanding the lived experience

Refugees come from a fire into a fire.

Mary Pipher, *The Middle of Everywhere*

One plane, one journey took me away from my life.

Bosnian girl, age 14, Refugee Education, p. 138

Some immigrant families chose to leave their country of birth and come to Canada, and some have been forced to leave by circumstances beyond their control, including war, violence, famine, poverty, natural disasters, or political instability. Some English language learners with limited prior schooling have experienced significant emotional trauma which may affect their ability to learn and to adjust to their new country. Being immigrants is not their total experience, but rather their most recent past. They may not see themselves with the same eyes as others may see them.

Darko's story provides a picture of how much changed for his family. His experience speaks for many refugees about the impact of war on their lives.

● **Darko**, 24, arrived as a young teenager with his parents and brother from Sarajevo, Yugoslavia. His first language is Croatian.

"One day, everything was normal; it was fun. I went to school, I played with my friends – and then, everything changed. All of a sudden, it was bombing, it was dangerous, everyone was worried, and we didn't know who to trust. My parents had good jobs – they were both professionals. For several years, we waited. We couldn't go to school or even go out much.

Then, one day my parents decided that we had to leave. It was hard to leave our lives behind, but they knew if we didn't, my brother and I would end up in the army. We had to go through the night, and I couldn't even say goodbye to my friends. It took quite a while. We were in a refugee camp in Germany for a long time before we found out we could come to Canada.

My parents said that they did this for us and I know it is true, because it has been hard for them. They learned English, they work very hard – they will never have the kinds of lives they once had. My brother and I worked hard to learn English, and it took us a long time to catch up at school. It still seemed easier for us because we had friends to help us out. We have both completed college now, and my parents are really proud. I know that we owe them a lot."

Age, gender, and urban or rural life experiences vary for each student and have a significant impact on the adaptation process. A student who arrives as a teenager may face different issues from someone who arrives as a pre-adolescent. Gender roles and relationships, including relationships with authority figures, may be redefined and confusing for both males and females. Some females may have had fewer opportunities to attend school than their male siblings. A student from a rural setting may experience more anxiety adjusting to an urban environment than a student who has experienced city life.

Families have been through very trying times, and there has often been a huge shift in the family dynamic. The family is trying to adjust to a new society and new expectations. Different rates of acculturation between parents and children, shifting roles, different rates of language acquisition, and family expectations place stress on the family.

### Teachers can

- provide a consistent, safe place in which to learn, with clear parameters, where values of equity and inclusion are evident and demonstrated.
- ensure that learning environments reflect the diversity of the learners, so that all students can see themselves represented in their classrooms.
- recognize that the learner's needs go beyond academic needs.
- learn about geographical, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds of students through reading, settlement resources, and positive, informal interaction with students.
- confer with other subject teachers to monitor progress, share information and ideas, and ensure appropriate degrees of challenge for students.
- establish peer buddy groups, perhaps related to first language, and monitor relationships to ensure that the relationships are beneficial for all.

A helpful website for teachers and newcomer families is [www.settlement.org](http://www.settlement.org)

## The adjustment process

All newcomers experience a period of cultural adjustment. This process is not linear, and all individuals adjust differently and often can experience setbacks.

### Arrival and first impressions

Learn and practise pronouncing the students' names and greet the students by name when they arrive in class.

For these students, learning the new rules and understanding the expectations schools have for all students is both exciting and frightening. This is an opportune time to teach students about the school's expectations of and for them.

Due to their lack of experience in particular settings, students may need strategies and explicit instruction about the "hidden" curriculum or the "unwritten" rules of social interaction, such as personal space, school routines and expectations for behaviour, safety procedures, homework, and dress codes for special events. By explicitly teaching the "hidden" curriculum, teachers can help ELLs with limited prior schooling develop confidence as learners.

### **Culture shock**

Students are often overwhelmed by the daunting task of catching up to their age peers academically and making sense of their new environment. They need encouragement and guidance through this phase.

### **Recovery and optimism**

Students whose language and culture are valued gain confidence in their abilities to succeed in learning. They need consistent and appropriate support at school.

### **Acculturation**

Students will understand more about how to succeed in school and gain more balance and control in their lives. The school enables them to move effectively between their old and new linguistic and cultural worlds.

For further information, see *Ontario Ministry of Education, Many Roots, Many Voices*, p. 39

### **A note about adolescents**

Students going through the period of adolescence face significant challenges. For ELLs with limited prior schooling, this is compounded by the challenges of adjusting to a new culture and environment. They face the typical issues of adolescence while developing their own sense of identity and self-confidence. The rebelliousness of adolescence may even extend to coming to Canada, since students may have had no choice in the decision.

For the ELL with limited prior schooling, there is the additional concern of being out of phase with age peers. Students quickly compare their work and their skills with what they perceive others to be doing in school. This is especially true when a student arrives in a secondary school. Students and families may not have realistic expectations about the time it will take them to catch up, or if they do understand the reality, they may feel quite discouraged. The school plays a critical role in helping the student navigate new experiences and build self-esteem, perspective, and a positive outlook.

For programming suggestions and teaching strategies, see Section 3: Teaching the English language learner with limited prior schooling.

## Broad-based strategies

As teachers plan programs for English language learners with limited prior schooling, there are some broad-based strategies that they can consider and adapt to directly support these ELLs in adjusting to school and in accelerating their literacy, language, and academic learning.

- Ongoing assessment *of, as, and for* learning
- Intensive ELD program support
- Modification of some or all curriculum expectations in all subject areas, as needed, to provide appropriate challenges and opportunities that accelerate learning so students can reach the level expected of their age peers
- Intensive instruction to develop and build on their conceptual understanding and knowledge in key curriculum areas
- Daily integration with English-speaking peers
- Opportunities to maintain and use first language as a bridge to new learning
- Recognition of the learners' abilities, strengths, and experiences through programming that builds on these capabilities
- Help to develop and adjust to the academic expectations and the behaviours that address conduct and routines in the school environment
- Guidance and support for making transitions (e.g., Grade 5 to 6, 8 to 9, and secondary and beyond)

## Goals for ELLs arriving at different ages

Grades 3–6	Grades 7–8	Grades 9–12
<p>Younger children with gaps in formal schooling may not have learned to read or write in any language.</p> <p>The goal is to develop the academic and socio-cultural skills that will be the foundation for future learning.</p>	<p>Students in these grades who have gaps in formal schooling arrive at a time when there are advanced academic expectations for their age peers.</p> <p>The goal is to make a successful transition to secondary school and to make important decisions about their academic future. To achieve this goal they need an accelerated program and support in this new learning environment.</p>	<p>Students arriving during their secondary school years face significant challenges in closing the education gap by developing the skill level and shared knowledge of age peers.</p> <p>The goal is to be successful in secondary school, be prepared for further education and careers, and recognize the relevance of life long learning.</p>

Students should have many and varied experiences with technology that enable them to move effectively into their new linguistic and cultural world.

## Accelerate learning

ELLs with limited prior schooling must cover approximately two academic years in each year to catch up to their age peers. This requires an accelerated program which starts where the students are and fills in the gaps as quickly and efficiently as possible. The teacher needs to provide the learning that is required as a foundation for moving forward. The later a student arrives, the greater the challenge of reaching back, but at the same time moving forward toward an urgent goal. Providing targeted support at the appropriate time is critical to the success of the learner.

● **Biak**, 9, arrived in November from Myanmar. She was born in a refugee camp in Thailand, where her family had lived for several years. Biak speaks Karen, but neither she nor her parents can read or write in their language. In the initial interview attended by the family and a settlement worker, it was determined that she had very little formal schooling. The intial assessment indicated that her ability to use everyday oral English was very limited. In the six months since she arrived, she is beginning to recognize the English alphabet and numerals, as well as many everyday English words.

### Accelerating Biak's learning ...

- A modified instructional program that has been developed collaboratively with her classroom teacher and a support teacher with ESL/ELD qualifications
- This intensive ELD program includes Biak frequently working with the ESL/ELD teacher
- Recognizing that Biak perseveres and is willing to try new things, the classroom teacher works with her on strategies to decode words and on creating a personal picture dictionary that she will continue to build as she progresses in her language and literacy development
- The teacher partners Biak with class buddies who help her learn and understand class, school, and playground routines to facilitate her adjustment to the school culture and her inclusion within her peer group

● **Fatima**, 13, was born in rural Sudan. Her first language is Nuer, and she also speaks some Arabic. She attended school sporadically for four years before her family fled civil war. She spent time at home with her cousins and siblings – two older brothers, an older sister, and a younger brother. When she arrived a year ago, she was assessed, placed in a Grade 7 class, and provided ELD support.

This year, in Grade 8, she is becoming more comfortable and more socially outgoing, enjoys learning, and is an interested, observant participant in classroom activities. While Fatima's oral language grows every day, she still struggles with adapted and age-appropriate printed texts and with writing tasks. Fatima can say many of the words in some of the printed text but, because of her limited academic English, she does not comprehend most of what she is reading. Since she has an excellent memory, she relies heavily on demonstrating her learning and communicating orally.

"My teacher was so good. She showed me how to learn the letters of the alphabet. She brought pictures – lots of pictures – to school and taught us the names."

Female, 9

### Accelerating Fatima's learning ...

- A modified instructional program that has been developed collaboratively with her teachers and a support teacher with ESL/ELD qualifications. Her program includes modifying curriculum expectations in all subjects as needed to provide appropriate challenges for her to accelerate her learning
- Intensive work with an ESL/ELD support teacher to develop and build on conceptual understanding and knowledge in key curriculum areas and to support classroom instruction
- Continued opportunities to work in large and small groups with her English-speaking peers to extend her use of everyday and academic English
- Guidance from the school's intermediate division team in choosing a secondary school program that includes ELD courses and courses adapted for English language learners in other subject areas

#### Insight

Students arriving at this age may have developed some literacy in their first language (L1), although not to the level of their age peers. Any early schooling they might have had would support their cognitive development and act as a foundation for further education. Student concerns at this age are compounded by the issues of adolescence – identity, peer pressure, and conformity. When students arrive in Grades 7 or 8, there is the increased pressure of course selection and decisions about secondary school.

*"I had a teacher who showed me how to do homework and how to get from one class to another."*

Male, 15

The principal has the discretion to make substitutions for a maximum of three compulsory courses at the secondary level to address the specific needs of English language learners.

English Language Learners/ ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, for Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.7.1.

● **Mustafa**, 16, grew up in an isolated community in Afghanistan where his access to school was limited. His first language is Dari. The family moved when his older brothers were being forced into the military. After being separated for several years in different refugee camps for dislocated persons, the family was reunited and came to Canada as government-sponsored refugees. Mustafa's parents are both working and his mother studies English in an adult ESL class.

Mustafa has some oral English proficiency, but he doesn't speak very confidently and teachers often have trouble understanding him. An initial assessment indicated that he has limited proficiency in reading and writing. He enjoys mathematics and demonstrates strong computational skills.

#### **Accelerating Mustafa's learning ...**

- ELD courses throughout the year (e.g., ELDAO first semester, ELDBO second semester)
- A locally developed compulsory credit mathematics course to build on his interest and strength in mathematics
- Courses in key subjects such as science, geography, civics or career education adapted to the needs of English language learners
- An adapted Learning Strategies 1 (GLS10) course to support academic success
- Guidance in considering courses in a variety of subject areas that do not require a high level of English language proficiency
- Guidance in selecting a program that includes cooperative education to give him the preparation he needs to reach his goals beyond secondary school

#### **Teacher Reflection**

- What characteristics and needs in these examples of English language learners with limited prior schooling are similar to those of students in my class?
- How can I use this information in planning ways to support my students?

## Building positive relationships

The teacher gets to know students by interacting with them as individuals and listening to what they have to say. Teachers need to be sensitive to students' previous experiences, which could include conflict, unrest, and oppression. For some students, it is a challenge to trust any authority figure. Learners need an understanding teacher who sets clear boundaries, has high expectations for them, and believes in their ability to learn.

"My teacher never made us feel stupid for asking a question. She always took the time to help us understand the everyday stuff that you need."

Female, 17

### Teacher Reflections

I had a student who one day quietly said to me that he did not want to remember anything from his past. I tried to respect that, even while other students really wanted to share things from their past. It reinforced for me the importance of listening – really listening – to my students.

One day, I brought a book to our classroom that had information and pictures from many countries in the world. My students were very interested in this book, and one student in particular wanted to show me things and tell me about what it was like in his country. He had been pretty quiet to this point, but he really came alive that day, and when he saw my interest, he was encouraged to talk more. That single book stimulated some good talking and learning.

"My teacher made me feel good about myself and proud of what I can do."

Male, 21

## **Students with possible Special Education needs**

It is important to recognize that ELLs will demonstrate exceptionalities (including giftedness) in similar proportions to the general population. However, it is often difficult to determine the nature of ELLs' exceptionality before they are fully fluent in English. Characteristics of learning a second language may mimic characteristics of some learning exceptionalities.

When ELLs with limited prior schooling are several years out of phase with their age peers, educators may inadvertently assume that these students have special education needs when the difficulties that they are experiencing relate to their prior lack of opportunity for formal learning.

These students may:

- initially make slow progress when compared to their age peers who have been in school, because they need time to adjust to school and a new culture, and to acquire oral language proficiency;
- forget concepts and have difficulty remembering words and ideas, because the concepts are culturally irrelevant to them or are not taught in a context that builds on the students' prior knowledge;
- avoid trying to learn to read, because they are intimidated by the facility of others around them and they feel that they will never acquire this skill;
- be unable to retell a simple story in sequence, because they lack the vocabulary to effectively retell the story; however, they may be able to demonstrate that they have understood the concepts by arranging visuals in the correct order or retelling the same story in their first language;
- appear to have short attention spans, because learning in another language is an exhausting task. Students are typically immersed in their new language all day, and find it difficult to concentrate when they are tired, or have trouble understanding what is being said;
- may score very low on standard assessment tools, because they have had limited education that allows them to read and write in their first language and limited or no experience with formal assessment.

Adapted from E. Hamayan, B. Marler, C. Sanchez-Lopez, & J. Damico, *Special Education Considerations for English Language Learners*, p. 15

English language learners can be identified as having special education needs – even if they are very recent arrivals. Some special education needs may become evident during the initial reception interview, especially if they relate to a physical disability such as a hearing impairment. Parents may have information and documentation about special education needs that were identified in their home country. Other students may have special education needs that have not previously been identified, especially if they are from countries where these services do not exist or are very limited.

Their needs may not become apparent until they have been in the school for several weeks or months. It is important to identify students with special education needs as soon as possible so that they can receive the support they need in addition to ESL or ELD, and other support that is provided for newcomers and English language learners.

English language learners with limited prior schooling who may have special education needs must be referred to the appropriate school team. ESL/ELD and Special Education teachers need to work collaboratively to design an appropriate program for an English language learner who also has special education needs. This learner can receive ESL or ELD services and special education services simultaneously.

See *English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007*, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4.





## Assessing the English language learner with limited prior schooling

### CONTEXT

- Initial assessment is a critical process in identifying ELLs with limited prior schooling to determine starting points for instruction.
- Diagnostic assessment, frequently informal and culturally sensitive, is often required to determine prior knowledge and gaps in education.
- Assessment *for* learning is critical to the success of ELLs with limited prior schooling as it informs teacher practice.
- Assessment *of* learning allows students to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do in a variety of authentic and individualized contexts.
- Assessment *as* learning includes metacognitive, reflective, and goal-setting activities.
- Effective assessment identifies progress over time.

When designing instruction for English language learners, opportunity to learn should be the guiding principle. It is neither equitable nor ethical to assess students' performance on the basis of knowledge or skills that they have had no opportunity to learn.

E. Coelho, *Adding English*, p. 260

## Assessment

Assessment is used for at least six purposes with English language learners, including those with limited prior schooling: for screening and identification, for placement, for reclassification or exit, for monitoring student progress, for program evaluation, and for accountability. English language learners require authentic assessment with multiple opportunities (e.g., performance, portfolios, and self-assessment) to demonstrate their achievement of curriculum expectations and learning skills.

Chamot and O’Malley (1993) describe alternative assessments:

- *Authentic* – reflecting actual classroom tasks in content areas and revealing information about academic language
- *Varied* – looking at student performance from multiple perspectives rather than relying on only one assessment approach so that all aspects of content and academic knowledge are assessed
- *Process* – as well as *product-oriented* – showing progress with respect to both work products and the processes and learning strategies used to complete the work
- *Continuous* – providing information about student performance that shows growth throughout the entire school year
- *Interactive with instruction* – used to adjust instruction for student needs and provide feedback on instructionally valued tasks
- *Collaborative* – planned and conducted by teachers interactively to share and gain independent views of student performance

Ontario Ministry of Education, *TIPS for English Language Learners: Developing Mathematical Literacy for ALL*, p. 24

## Initial assessment

Since students have experienced gaps in their formal schooling, it is critical to determine a starting point for targeted instruction that supports accelerated learning and student growth and success.

Students also display a range and variety of learning abilities and needs, so initial assessment is an essential first step.

School boards will assign staff to assess the English language proficiency of all English language learners. The assessment procedure will include:

- a structured interview to assess oral communication skills (i.e., listening and speaking);
- an assessment of reading comprehension;
- an assessment of student writing;
- an assessment of mathematical knowledge and skills.

The initial assessment offers a detailed picture of the individual student that provides the teacher with a starting point for planning instruction. Insight into

the student's first language proficiency in all areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, and into the student's academic and personal experiences is vital to providing instruction that targets the specific areas of learning. In addition, it is important to include an assessment of the student's ability in mathematics.

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.3.1.*

### Initial interviews

The initial interview can provide insight into the student's personal and academic experiences; this information is important in helping the teacher meet the student's educational needs. An initial interview takes time and patience, and requires establishing a comfortable rapport at the outset. The interviewer must clearly convey that the detailed, and often personal, information requested is for educational purposes only, to help the school provide appropriate ELD program support for the student. In some countries, this type of information is shared with a variety of agencies, and there may be some reluctance to disclose.

Teachers should be sensitive about asking questions that could be tied to experiences of loss or trauma. As well, teachers should be cognizant of differences in non-verbal communication. For example, smiles from parents or students of various cultural backgrounds might signal happiness, an apology, or nervousness. The head waggle in South Asian cultures which is a movement that can be misinterpreted as a "no" by Canadians, actually signals, among other things, agreement and thanks. In Turkish culture, nodding your head to the front means "yes," but throwing your head slightly to the back, raising your eyebrows, and clicking your tongue means "no."

When gathering information about the student, it is important to respect and honour family culture and traditions.

Where possible, schools should use L1 to communicate with parents. The school settlement worker or an interpreter can provide positive support in eliciting accurate and complete information during a first meeting with parents who are not conversant in English. It may be necessary to elicit some key information at a later date; families are often hesitant to share certain information for a variety of legitimate reasons. Sometimes information may not be completely accurate, for example, parents may overestimate the English language proficiency of their child, based on results from English language courses taken in the country of origin, and they might not fully understand the need for ESL/ELD support for their child. The experience of school in a new country is unfamiliar, and parental experiences of school, along with beliefs about the roles of school and home in a child's education, may differ from those of the receiving school system.

When confidential information is being discussed, the interpreter should be a bilingual teacher, a professional interpreter or an adult member of the student's family, to facilitate accuracy of translation.

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.8.3.*

### Insight

Each student is unique and must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Students may have totally different life experiences. Teachers should be cautious about making assumptions about a student based on information about other students from the same country.

## Considerations

### Languages spoken

Students may have a strong vocabulary base in one or more languages. They usually have oral proficiency, but lack academic vocabulary and reading and writing skills. Some may not be fluent in some of the languages learned.

### Literacy levels

Initial writing samples for assessment should be in all languages in which the student can write even a little, and should be collected over a period of several days or weeks, to obtain a student's best effort. Suggested topics: a description of a school attended, with teacher questions to scaffold the writing, or a description of the plane ride and arrival in Canada, to demonstrate thinking and organization of ideas.

### Previous schooling

Information about where the student's school experience was (e.g., in an urban or rural setting, in a refugee camp) is important. Determine the reasons for times the student was not in school (e.g., transit, illness, prolonged migration, different start and end dates for the school year).

Schools in Ontario are usually open from September to June. Find out:

- when school was open in their country;
- when most children begin school in their country;
- when their child began school;
- if he/she was with others of the same age in his/her last class;
- how many days per month/year their child was absent.

### Grade levels

Although grade levels might be known by the same name, they do not necessarily parallel those in Ontario, since the curricula are not parallel. Parents may need an explanation about the Ontario policy regarding placement of English language learners.

A student's level of proficiency in English will not influence the choice of grade placement. In elementary schools, English language learners will be placed with an age-appropriate group. In secondary schools, placement in a grade or in specific subjects will depend upon the student's prior education, background in specific subject areas, and aspirations.

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.4.2.*

### **Language of instruction**

If the school is described as one where English is the language of instruction, find out about:

- the language in which textbooks, if available, were written;
- language(s) spoken by the teacher and the students in class – the texts may have been in one language, but the discussions may have been in another;
- the language(s) of instruction for each subject area.

### **School**

Ask about class size, organization and size of the school, length of the school day, favourite subjects, sports activities, etc.

### **Other experiences**

ELLs with limited prior schooling may have moved frequently. A year-by-year account of schooling will uncover attendance gaps. Reasons for these gaps may include: prohibitive school fees, migration, prolonged or recurrent illness, social or emotional factors, lack of adult supervision of attendance, intermittent education in language(s) other than L1, limited access to adequate educational resources in the country of residence, and denial of access to schooling because of citizenship or gender.

### **Reinforcement of L1**

Stress the importance of first language maintenance and continued development for reasons of family communication, cultural identity, overall language development, and as an asset in the global economy. Some families may decide to speak English at home to accelerate the process of English language acquisition for their children. It is important that parents and students understand the vital role of continued development of first language skills throughout the process of acquiring a new language.

### **Key messages to communicate**

Communicate clearly the importance of regular attendance; behaviour expectations; school safety plans, including bullying and harassment policies; how to get help with homework; lunch routines; and timetables. Remind students and parents to call when they have questions and concerns.

Hill, Little, and Sims (2004) recommend using varied assessment techniques that are developmentally appropriate and set in familiar contexts.

Assessment strategies are suggested in *TIPS for English Language Learners in Mathematics*, 2006.

### Health issues

Recognize that the learner's needs go beyond academic needs. Take into account concerns related to vision, hearing, dental and medical needs, mental health issues, etc., which may not have been identified or treated.

### Other information

In obtaining sensitive information, reassure parents that the information will be used to plan programs to support their child's learning while respecting the family's privacy and honouring its culture and traditions.

## Assessment for learning

The key understanding that *assessment informs instruction* – assessment for learning – is particularly critical in assessing English language learners with limited prior schooling. Ongoing assessment allows the teacher to monitor student progress while targeting and modifying instruction to support the student's individual learning needs. Information gathered can be shared with school support staff (e.g., the librarian, the literacy support teacher, or resource staff).

Assessment tools can be used for the ongoing assessment, monitoring, and tracking of learners. Some assessment tools can include teacher observation, cumulative checklists, true/false listening quizzes, role plays, cloze exercises, matching exercises, sequence exercises, draw and label tasks, dialogue journals, oral responses, problem solving, making booklets, response journals, portfolios for writing, reading, or a collection of student work from all subject areas. It is important to remember that the same assessment tool may not be appropriate for every student at any one time.

We can observe a great deal about children's ability to read and write in their first language. Although we may not understand the first language, we can listen to children read and know whether they read fluently or haltingly; whether they use pictures or other strategies to tackle words that they do not know; whether they attend to print on the page; or whether they have book knowledge, such as holding the book or turning pages. These can all be determined during a reading and writing conference – a powerful opportunity of assessment for learning in action.

Simply watching our students who are learning English interact with books can be an excellent assessment opportunity as well ... We can collect an extraordinary amount of information about them as readers and as writers simply by watching and listening."

L. Calkins et al., *The Art of Conferring with Young Writers*, p. 126

- **Aimal**, 11, arrives with her mother from Eritrea. Her first language is Amharic. During the initial assessment at the board reception centre, the ESL/ELD teacher completes a language, literacy, and numeracy assessment. He determines that Aimal has significant gaps in her learning. He sends a comprehensive report to Aimal's school recommending age-appropriate placement in Grade 5. The school staff uses these recommendations for creating Aimal's academic program. A qualified ESL/ELD support teacher works collaboratively with the classroom teacher to decide how to modify expectations and differentiate instruction in programming for Aimal.

#### **Assessing Aimal's progress ...**

- As part of ongoing assessment for learning, her classroom teacher monitors Aimal's progress in her English language and literacy development in all subjects.

During a science class, her teacher makes anecdotal notes as she observes Aimal and a classmate using the computer to classify types of weather in a visual graphic organizer. Her teacher determines that Aimal understands the basic concepts about weather and is comfortable using technology. She notes that Aimal would benefit from continued learning opportunities in which she uses technology to make sense of and demonstrate her learning.

During a literacy learning block, the teacher uses a highly visual non-fiction text when conferencing with Aimal. Aimal enjoys engaging with print and identifies the content using her first language and picture clues. She demonstrates that she understands how to interact with English-language books as she moves through the pages from front to back and from left to right. The teacher uses this information to help Aimal extend her language learning. She provides key vocabulary as she models for Aimal how to create a dual-language picture book on the computer.

- Her teacher shares the information about Aimal's progress with the ESL/ELD support teacher as they continue to plan Aimal's program together.

#### **Teacher Reflection**

- What characteristics and needs in this example of an English language learner with limited prior schooling are similar to those of a student in my class?
- How can I use this information in planning ways to support my student?

## Assessment as learning

Assessment as learning includes metacognitive, reflective, and goal-setting activities. Metacognitive skills – the ability to understand oneself as a learner, to reflect on the personal process of learning, and to identify and set personal learning goals – are critical components of learning which empower students to take ownership of their learning and increase their engagement and control of their success.

Assessment as learning emphasizes “the role of the student, not only as a contributor to the assessment and learning process, but also as the critical connector between them. The student is the link. Students, as active, engaged, and critical assessors, can make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge, and master the skills involved. This is the regulatory process in metacognition. It occurs when students personally monitor what they are learning and use the feedback from this monitoring to make adjustments, adaptations, and even major changes in what they understand. Assessment as learning is the ultimate goal, where students are their own best assessors.”

L. Earl, “Assessment of Learning, for Learning, and as Learning.” *Assessment as Learning: Using Classroom Assessment to Maximize Student Learning* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2003)

## Tools for Assessment

Some assessment as learning tools include surveys, interest inventories, checklists, reader’s notebooks, and sentence stems to guide reflection. Through the use of portfolios and student-teacher conferences, teachers can come to understand students’ learning styles, support them in identifying work samples that reflect their learning, and assist students in identifying and achieving their learning goals.

### Portfolios

Collecting and maintaining a portfolio of student work is an excellent way to record and demonstrate a student’s progress over time. Portfolios allow students to see various stages of work in progress and help them begin to recognize quality work. Writing portfolios can offer students insight into the process of writing. If students work closely with their teachers to develop various forms of portfolio assessments, they will learn to evaluate their own work and the work of others. As well, this information is easily shared with parents to demonstrate student progress.

### Student-teacher conferences

Teachers can use question prompts to guide their conversations with their students.

- What could you do after you listen to check and see if you understood what you heard?
- What words have you learned in the books you are reading that help you understand what you hear, or that you can use while you are speaking?
- How does listening to someone else read help you become a better reader?
- How does talking to someone else about what you are reading help you as a reader?
- How does looking at the pictures help you make sense of/understand what you are reading?
- How did you know what words are missing?
- How did talking with other students help you with your project?
- How did you get the idea for your caption?
- What words in the text helped you make a picture in your mind?
- Were the instructions for the recipe clear and easy-to-follow? Why or why not?
- How does the word wall help you while you are writing?
- What questions can you ask yourself while you are listening to help you understand what you have heard?

*The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language, Revised, 2006 and The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9–12: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development, Revised, 2007.*

## Assessment of learning

Students should be assessed on their academic strengths as well as on their linguistic growth. Teachers should use a variety of strategies to give students many opportunities to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do.

### Examples

Achievement Chart Categories	Sample Activity
<b>Knowledge and Understanding</b> - Subject-specific content acquired in each grade (knowledge) and the comprehension of its meaning and significance (understanding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Language Experience Story: Find five words in the story that name things in our classroom.</li><li>Classify pictures or objects related to weather.</li><li>Match classroom objects with their pictures.</li><li>Make a list of things you have on your desk.</li></ul>
<b>Thinking</b> – The use of critical and creative thinking skills and/or processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Give an opinion as to whether you can believe everything that is said in an advertisement.</li><li>Compare characters in two books using a Venn diagram.</li><li>Create a T-shirt logo to illustrate diversity (with teacher support).</li><li>Make a list of five things that are big and five things that are small.</li></ul>
<b>Communication</b> – The conveying of meaning through various forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sequence pictures to retell a story or event.</li><li>Show all the actions you use when you move your body.</li></ul>
<b>Application</b> – The use of knowledge and skills to make connections within and between various contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Use pictures and words from the word wall to write a story.</li><li>If someone from our class were going to your country, find all the things on the word wall that they should take with them.</li><li>Write a new pattern book based on one read in class.</li></ul>

### A performance task – One teacher’s approach

One of the biggest challenges is to teach language vocabulary and concepts in ways that are age-appropriate and that develop critical thinking skills.

For a performance task in ELDCO, I was looking for an idea that involved authentic writing to engage students, challenge them, and build their confidence as writers. I decided to have them use the computer to share something about themselves. From the course expectations, I could see connections to speaking and reading such as using grammatical structures, vocabulary building, word recognition, and locating and organizing information. There were connections to writing for personal and academic purposes using writing strategies and including post-writing reflection. The added incentive for students was developing their familiarity with technology.

Before we went to the computer lab, I introduced the assignment: students were to write stories, with support, and these would be printed and submitted for evaluation. We designed and reviewed a rubric for the assignment so students were clear about what I would assess and evaluate.

The students chose from a list of topics, including “memories of my early years,” “people who are important to me,” “my Canadian home,” “memories of this year,” “my favourite songs,” “something I have learned,” “something I want to do in the future,” and “the kind of person I want to be.” Students had to write a paragraph or more about their chosen topic.

The first days in the computer lab were hectic, but something good was happening. Every student, at one time or another, needed individual attention. Some students had already taken computer courses, which was helpful. Others needed encouragement just to turn on the computer and start to type. A few students needed to be asked prompting questions, and they dictated their words for the first day or two. Some were more familiar with the software’s features (e.g., inserting pictures). One student said, “I wrote that? It looks so good!”

They read their drafts to one another in small groups, revised their work, and submitted their final products to me. The pride in their work was very evident. They learned a lot about the possibilities of technology, and their own capabilities.

#### Teacher Reflection

- How will I involve my students in the assessment process?
- How can I help students understand how the assessment process supports them?
- How can I provide opportunities for students to be partners in determining next steps for their learning?

### Insight

Assessment tools regularly used by classroom teachers and formal board and provincial tools for literacy assessment, are designed for students who are proficient users of English and are inappropriate for ELLs with limited prior schooling. For example, some require students to read unfamiliar material aloud. Having English language learners read aloud material that they have not read before, or have difficulty reading, is not informative to assessing their understanding of text. Another concern is that the content of the reading material is often culturally inappropriate for students who were not raised and educated in an English-language environment in Canada.

## Evaluation and reporting

The school board will establish procedures for ensuring ongoing assessment of the development of proficiency in English and the academic progress of each English language learner. Progress will be reported to parents on a regular basis.

The information on student achievement gathered through assessment and evaluation should be communicated to students and parents at regular intervals and in a variety of informal and formal ways, using a language that the parent is comfortable with, whenever possible.

When learning expectations are modified for English language learners, evaluation will be based on the documented modified expectations. This will be noted on the report card and explained to parents.

Teachers will indicate, using the appropriate box on the report card, when modifications to curriculum expectations have been made to address the ESL or ELD needs of English language learners.

In completing the report card, teachers *do not* check the modification box to indicate:

- that the student is participating in ESL or ELD programs or courses; or
- that accommodations have been provided (e.g., extra time to complete assignments, access to a bilingual dictionary, opportunities to work in the student's first language).

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.8.1 and 2.8.2.*

## Large-scale assessments

English language learners should participate in the Grade 3 and Grade 6 provincial assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics, and in the Grade 9 provincial assessment in mathematics, when they have acquired the level of proficiency in English required for success.

Decisions about exemptions and referrals will be made according to the requirements articulated in the EQAO administration guide.

English language learners should take the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test when they have acquired the level of proficiency in English required for success.

English language learners should participate in national and international assessments when they have acquired the level of proficiency in English required for success.

For more detailed information refer to the EQAO administration guides ([www.eqao.com](http://www.eqao.com)).

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.9.1 to 2.9.4.*



# 3

## Teaching the English language learner with limited prior schooling

### CONTEXT

- Affirming the student's identity is the key to learning for ELLs with limited prior schooling.
- It is important to value and maintain first language, since it is the foundation on which language and literacy are built.
- Oral language is the foundation for thought and learning for ELLs with limited prior schooling.
- Effective instruction for ELLs with limited prior schooling must reach back to begin where the learner is and focus on the needs of the learner.
- Students need appropriate and timely intervention, which includes an accelerated program to bridge the gaps created by missed educational opportunities.

Students need to have their identity and culture affirmed as a starting point for further learning. They need to see the connections between who they are, what they value, and what they are learning in school in order to make sense of the learning and integrate it into their whole being.

*Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario, 2000, p. 18*

## Key elements in effective instruction

### 1. Affirming the identity of the learner

How teachers affirm students	What it looks like
Find ways to help students see themselves as learners, reflecting on progress and setting new goals for themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The prerequisite for engagement is a comprehensible task at a level of challenge appropriate to the student.</li><li>Instil belief in students as capable learners.</li><li>Value what students bring with them, including their prior learning, international experience, cultural insight, and curiosity.</li><li>Help students discover their own strengths.</li></ul>
Reach back to where the learners are.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Teach to the cognitive level and prior learning of students by differentiating instruction.</li></ul>
Build a sense of community in the classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Model an attitude of inclusion for all.</li><li>Build on essential skills by using cooperative/collaborative learning strategies as the foundation for instruction.</li><li>Use team-building activities to strengthen relationships among peers.</li><li>Encourage discussion to share ideas and for students to get to know each other as individuals.</li></ul>
Recognize first language (L1) and culture as tools for learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Guide students to make strategic use of L1 as they make sense of learning (e.g., brainstorm the steps, ask questions or discuss with a peer, review procedures).</li><li>Encourage students to speak their first language at home for continued cognitive growth and positive family relationships.</li><li>Incorporate multilingual signs and cultural information within the school community.</li></ul>
Help students identify and plan future goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Make students aware of the variety of post-secondary opportunities and careers.</li><li>Promote lifelong learning.</li></ul>

#### Insight

Second-language learners in English-language schools “benefit academically, socially, and emotionally when they are encouraged to develop and maintain proficiency in their first language while they are learning English. Language skills and conceptual knowledge are readily transferable from one language to another ...”

*The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development: A Resource Guide, 2001, p. 10*

## 2. Engaging the learner

How teachers teach for engagement	What it looks like
Teach to the cognitive level of the student to build on higher-order thinking skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide age-appropriate cross-curricular reading materials and classroom resources that are accessible to students at varying reading levels.</li> <li>Model and explicitly teach the academic skills and social expectations required for success in school and at work.</li> <li>Focus on helping students understand how academic language works.</li> <li>Use targeted instruction to accelerate learning.</li> <li>Use students' interests and prior learning to inform instruction.</li> </ul>
Scaffold all instruction for meaning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use students' interests, strengths, and areas of expertise as springboards for learning.</li> <li>Build and extend background knowledge by activating prior knowledge and linking it to new learning.</li> <li>Provide clear guidelines and structure for students.</li> <li>Incorporate student talk and meaningful dialogue in every lesson.</li> </ul>
Ensure that initial and ongoing assessment drive instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess students to determine starting points.</li> <li>Carefully monitor students' progress to see growth over time, providing integration opportunities, as appropriate.</li> <li>Determine the academic vocabulary most needed by students and reinforce its use in the classroom.</li> <li>Provide opportunities for students to make tangible gains that will build their confidence, based on appropriate levels of challenge.</li> </ul>

### Insight

Talking with others and sharing ideas is fundamental to learning, but not all talk sustains learning. For talk to promote learning, students need to be accountable for what they say and how they listen. They need explicit instruction in oral communication strategies and opportunities to practise so that they are equipped to interpret what others are saying, ask relevant questions, and engage in debate or respectful dialogue.

*Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario, 2004, p. 59*

### 3. Extending the learner's language

How teachers extend language	What it looks like
Recognize the importance of oral language as the foundation for learning in all subject areas, by incorporating talk into everything that students do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Build on students' existing understanding of language.</li><li>Encourage the use of L1 through meaningful activities; capitalize on the languages spoken by students to build on prior knowledge (e.g., students can use L1 to talk about the news with their families at home; strategically use L1 in classroom activities).</li><li>Build a repertoire of increasingly complex reading materials to support key concepts in core subjects.</li><li>Capitalize on the skills required to operate in more than one language with students who may be fluent in more than one language.</li></ul>
Concentrate on accelerating learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Focus on essential concepts for student success.</li><li>Chunk material and integrate learning.</li><li>Use a variety of visuals to illustrate, wherever possible.</li><li>Use the language experience approach to writing to build vocabulary in context and general knowledge.</li><li>Use innovative and flexible approaches to instruction.</li><li>Show the same information in different ways to allow students to explore relationships between pieces of information.</li></ul>
Understand that students learn best when the learning is meaningful to them and relevant to their individual contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Build on prior knowledge with much pre-writing and pre-reading discussion.</li><li>Structure post-writing and post-reading to include evaluation of the work and the process involved in the work.</li><li>Use collaborative learning to maximize students' understanding.</li><li>Employ information technology applications that would benefit ELLs (e.g., keyboarding, using specialized software).</li></ul>
Share learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Collaborate and consult with staff members (e.g., guidance counsellors, school-based team members, subject teachers, ELD teachers, International Language teachers) to find out more about the students and to help all staff develop a shared understanding of what these students can do and how rapidly they can progress.</li></ul>

#### Insight

Teachers should encourage parents to continue to use their first language at home in rich and varied ways as a foundation for language and literacy development in English.

All ELLs, but especially those with limited prior schooling, struggle with the frustration of not being able to express their thoughts and ideas to teachers and peers. It's easy to underestimate what the learner can do.

A strong foundation in the first language can help students develop mental flexibility, sharpen problem-solving skills, experience a sense of cultural stability and continuity, understand cultural and family values, develop awareness of global issues, and expand their future opportunities.

For more information, see *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development: A Resource Guide, 2001* and *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9–12: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development, Revised, 2007*.

## Academic language: The key to success

Along with the language they use every day, ELLs with limited prior schooling need academic language as much as any other student. For every year they spend in school, the academic language demands of texts increase in all subject areas. Concepts become more sophisticated, and more subject-specific vocabulary is needed. Understanding academic language will open doors and allow ELLs to communicate effectively orally and in writing.

One way to help learners develop their academic language proficiency is to encourage them to read extensively in a variety of genres. As students build their reading skills, they add to their academic vocabulary and understanding.

## Distinguishing features between everyday language and academic language

Everyday language includes:	Academic language includes:
the ability to maintain a face-to-face conversation with peers and with a variety of school personnel in various settings, inside and outside the classroom	the ability to understand when there is less opportunity for interaction (e.g., when listening to a presentation or reading a textbook)
the ability to talk, read, or write about familiar content or about what is happening here and now	the ability to talk, read, and write about content that has fewer connections to prior learning or personal experience, is more abstract, and is more distant in time or space (e.g., learning about the water cycle, studying the earth's crust, learning about World War I)
knowledge of basic vocabulary/high-frequency words, such as old, food, tired, cars, or trucks	knowledge of more sophisticated, low-frequency vocabulary, such as <i>ancient, nutrition, fatigued, or vehicles</i>
the ability to use simple sentences and the active voice, such as <i>We heated the water until it boiled to make hot chocolate</i>	the ability to use more complex sentences and the passive voice, as in reports: <i>When the water was heated to boiling point, a thermometer was used to measure the temperature</i>

### Administrator insight

Administrators play a critical part in ensuring that teachers receive the support they need to improve content-area literacy instruction for adolescent ELLs (Duff, 2005). This support should include scheduling time and opportunities for ESL and content teachers to collaborate and compare teaching strategies, to review the progress of ELLs in the school, and to choose appropriate interventions and classroom resources.

D. Short & S. Fitzsimmons, *Double the Work*

### Show me what it is.

#### Teachers can:

- use picture books, effective visuals, age-appropriate informational text and media, and real objects to introduce vocabulary and illustrate concepts (e.g., magazine pictures, photos, posters, flyers, brochures, advertisements, forms, timetables, schedules, real objects, money, models, maps);
- include orientation and life skills.

### Show me how to do it.

#### Teachers can:

- read and interact with appropriate texts, beginning with talk and moving to reading, writing – begin with language experience;
- use a variety of simple graphic organizers;
- provide explicit and clear directions;
- address safety issues explicitly;
- model and correct selectively, as making mistakes is part of learning a new language.

### Help me to do it.

#### Teachers can:

- provide targeted instruction;
- build background knowledge and explore prior knowledge;
- use techniques such as songs, music, drama, and reader's theatre for both junior- and senior-level students;
- support the use of L1 for learning;
- use visual supports (e.g., word walls, labelling).

### Let me try it on my own.

#### Teachers can:

- have students work in a variety of groupings: small groups, partners, individually;
- design meaningful tasks that are achievable by students;
- use technology to support language and literacy.

Adapted from E. Coelho, *Adding English*

## Strategies and Techniques

Strategy	Effective Techniques
<b>Get ready to teach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preview your materials and supplement the topic with additional resources at a variety of reading levels.</li> <li>Determine what background or experiential knowledge students need, and be prepared to provide this during the lesson.</li> <li>Reduce the topic to the most basic essential understandings (no more than three).</li> <li>Highlight key vocabulary that students will need.</li> <li>Make a one-page summary handout of the essential understandings and key vocabulary, using a variety of visuals.</li> </ul>
<b>Build background knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Print the lesson topic on the board.</li> <li>Choose simple language, using gestures and drawings, where possible.</li> <li>Use visual reinforcements such as word walls and concept maps.</li> <li>Relate the topic to the students' previous experience.</li> <li>Check comprehension by having the class work in pairs or small groups to restate the main ideas.</li> </ul>
<b>Use cooperative learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize structured group work and assign definite tasks that can be rotated (e.g., gatherer, work monitor, schedule monitor).</li> <li>Use flexible groupings related to L1 or to alternate assignments.</li> </ul>
<b>Make the key learnings transparent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a combination of explicit teaching, modelling, and practice with others.</li> <li>Adjust language so that all students can understand; rephrase and say in a different way.</li> <li>Give visual support by using pictures, models, and manipulatives.</li> <li>Continue to add key vocabulary to the word wall as you teach.</li> <li>Use comprehension checks frequently (e.g., have the students recap an instruction or restate a main point to their partner).</li> <li>Share your one-page summary handout with the class so that it can be used for further reference and review.</li> </ul>
<b>Scaffold reading and viewing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapt key material to an appropriate level.</li> <li>Prepare students for reading/viewing (e.g., pre-teach some of the key vocabulary, direct them to certain pages or sections of the text, provide a KWL chart to complete in groups).</li> <li>Model the reasoning process, using a think-aloud approach, as you read aloud to the class, or model how to think through word problems.</li> <li>Use guided reading for selected text.</li> <li>Debrief sections of text or video: students can complete graphic organizers as they read or view.</li> </ul>

For students with strong oral traditions, the literacy focus on documenting, recording, and writing accounts as proof of their learning, will be a new concept.

Strategy	Effective Techniques
<b>Scaffold writing and note-taking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Provide a graphic organizer summarizing the lesson and a key list of words for students to organize.</li><li>Collect and provide models of what completed work should look like.</li><li>Use cloze activities featuring key concepts and vocabulary.</li><li>Encourage jot notes in L1, although be aware that some students may not have enough academic language in L1 to do this.</li><li>Show students how to organize, study, and remember the information.</li></ul>
<b>Standardize the language you use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Make routines familiar and classroom instructions standard – say things in the same way each time so that students aren't unnecessarily confused by linguistic variety.</li><li>Keep the language in word problems simple, avoiding redundancy.</li></ul>
<b>Focus on language in every lesson</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Make key vocabulary an explicit focus of every lesson as it is introduced, written, repeated, and highlighted.</li><li>Create a word wall of words and phrases related to specific concepts.</li><li>Model the kinds of questions commonly asked in your subject.</li><li>Have thematically organized picture dictionaries available for use.</li><li>Encourage students to keep a vocabulary notebook for topics or units of work, and to spend a few minutes reviewing their new words at home every night.</li></ul>
<b>Acknowledge the role of errors in language development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Recognize that language learners will make errors, and that errors actually may increase as students attempt to use language in increasingly complex ways.</li><li>In assessing whether students have acquired skills and concepts, focus on content and performance.</li></ul>

#### Program planning considerations

- Oral language as the foundation for literacy
- Explicit and achievable expectations for students
- Student identity and engagement as central to the learning process
- Structured and predictable timetable that includes both literacy and numeracy learning blocks in a congregated setting
- Delivery of language instruction in numeracy as well as in literacy learning blocks
- Highly structured program in the learning blocks, but with open-ended opportunities for tangential learning – teachable moments
- Hands-on, interactive, and experiential learning (e.g., field trips, outdoor education, arts and cultural experiences)
- Strategies for developing cooperative and collaborative learning skills
- Use of real objects (e.g., money, models, maps, brochures)
- Daily, ongoing opportunities for interaction with English-language speakers

**Insight**

People often assume that it will be easy for younger students to catch up, because younger children tend to be “language sponges” and automatically pick up the skills they need by being totally immersed in an English-language environment. In reality, this only means that they “sound” fluent. However, these students are highly at risk because they have not had the opportunity to develop fundamental concepts and literacy skills in their first language.

## Program delivery models

In all situations, English language learners must receive appropriate program support to enable them to participate successfully in Ontario schools. In order to provide the best possible programming for English language learners, school boards should offer program models that take into consideration the numbers and distribution of English language learners across the school board.

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.5.1.*

It is a challenge for a school to provide programming that meets the distinct needs of English language learners with limited prior schooling. Their needs are very different from those of English language learners who have experienced consistent schooling. These learners share the cognitive abilities of their age peers and are keenly aware that they currently lack the skills necessary for success in an academic context.

Depending on students’ individual needs and local circumstances, various types of support can be provided. Students will require varying lengths of time and levels of support to acquire the English-language skills necessary for full and successful integration into the mainstream program.

Where low enrolment makes it difficult to offer courses in all schools, boards should devise innovative alternatives, such as clustering with other schools, and providing transportation to other sites.

*Think Literacy Success, Grades 7–12: The Report of the Expert Panel on Students at Risk in Ontario, p. 56*

## Elementary

Students benefit from targeted instruction as well as integration with their age peers, and from literacy learning block classes small enough to permit individual programming. Essential critical skills need to be developed using modified expectations and activities appropriate for individuals, particularly to capitalize on the time available. At the same time as students need to learn the academic skills to succeed, they also need to develop friendships, experience opportunities for leadership, and participate fully in the life of the school.

Full-day, segregated settings may limit this participation. A balance is needed so that students experience a learning environment where they can take risks and accelerate the development of their skills with support, while feeling a sense of belonging and empowerment in the school.

### Congregated model

Each ELL who arrives with limited prior schooling has unique personal circumstances. After an initial intake assessment and discussion with parents to learn about educational history, the principal may determine that the amount of differentiation possible in a mainstream setting is not enough to support the learner. To develop a foundation of literacy and numeracy skills, the student may be placed in a congregated ELD setting for a significant portion of each school day with other students who have interrupted schooling and who also require intensive support for accelerated learning. Wherever possible, students should also be integrated into mainstream classes that provide them with alternative forms for demonstrating their knowledge and understanding without demanding a high level of English proficiency, e.g., physical education and the arts.

● **Qasim**, 12, arrives at his neighbourhood elementary school near the end of January. He is accompanied by his 16-year-old sister and his 22-year-old brother who speaks some English. They have come from Tajikistan. After the registration process is completed and Qasim is welcomed into a Grade 7 class, the ESL/ELD teacher begins an initial assessment that takes place during the first few weeks of school. During the assessment, the teacher recognizes that Qasim has had limited prior schooling. Qasim says that he was in Grade 2 in Tajikistan, and had previously completed two years of school in Russia, starting at age eight.

The ESL/ELD teacher and classroom teacher realize the need for more detailed information regarding Qasim's educational background and arrange a meeting with the family, an interpreter, and school partners. It becomes evident that significant gaps in schooling exist because of the family's movement between countries.

A language assessment reveals that Qasim is reading and writing at a level appropriate to the schooling he has received; there is no evidence of a learning exceptionality.

After all the information is gathered, the principal determines that Qasim is an appropriate candidate for a congregated ELD class. There is such a class at a school outside his immediate area. Through an interpreter, Qasim's parents agree to the placement. Busing arrangements are made, and Qasim's family visits the receiving school with an interpreter. There, they tour the school, visit the congregated ELD classroom, and meet Qasim's new ELD teacher. Although Qasim is unsure about moving to a new school, he is reassured by the visit, and realizes that he will fit in and make friends quickly.

Among the other students that Qasim meets during his visit is Nicole. She has recently been chosen as a student ambassador at her school, and one of her jobs is to help conduct new-parent tours of the school building. As it happens, Nicole is also a student in the same ELD congregated class that Qasim will be joining.

- **Nicole**, 13, was born in St. George's, Grenada. When she was 6, she moved to a small rural community to live with her grandparents. There, she attended the village school at first, but regularly stayed at home to be with her grandmother, who was in poor health. She did not attend school at all after the age of 10. Nicole's father came to Canada, on his own, when Nicole was 7. He eventually found a good job, decided to remain in Canada, and has remarried. Now 13, Nicole has come to join her dad and her new blended family.

When Nicole first came to this school in September, her initial assessment process paralleled that of Qasim's. However, her student profile was very different from his. A full assessment revealed the following:

Nicole speaks the variety of English common in Grenada, and her oral skills are strong. She has a good basic vocabulary base on which to draw during discussions. She understands information that is read to her, however, her independent reading is limited. The inferences she makes, based on information that she has heard, are appropriate for her age. She asks good questions for clarification. She can write short sentences on her own, using some standard spellings. She has never been taught to compose paragraphs that reflect her own ideas. Nicole's mathematical knowledge and skills are significantly behind those of her age peers.

Nicole's father agreed with the school team's determination that she would benefit from a congregated ELD class placement. Nicole was placed in the congregated ELD class at her home school.

Literacy is about more than reading and writing – it is about how we communicate in society. It is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture. Literacy...finds its place in our lives alongside other ways of communicating. Indeed, literacy itself takes many forms: on paper, on the computer screen, on TV, on posters and signs. Those who use literacy take it for granted – but those who cannot use it are excluded from much communication in today's world. Indeed, it is the excluded who can best appreciate the notion of "literacy as freedom."

UNESCO statement for the United Nations Literacy Decade, 2003–2012

## **Organizing literacy and numeracy learning blocks**

The whole school's timetable is organized so that all students study core subjects within literacy and numeracy learning blocks. Language, mathematics, and history and geography (social studies in Grade 6) are taught in a dedicated learning block that makes up approximately half the school day. The ELD program is modelled on the school timetable, and is also delivered as literacy and numeracy learning blocks.

Qasim and Nicole are placed age-appropriately in different Grades 7 and 8 homeroom classes. The school's timetable shows a four-day cycle: for two days the learning block is in the morning and for the other two days the block is in the afternoon. Subjects taught outside this block (e.g., music, science, physical education, information technology) are scheduled in the opposite half of the day. Qasim and Nicole follow the same timetable as their peers. During the learning block, Qasim and Nicole go to the congregated ELD classroom, where other ELD students of a similar age, from various homeroom classes, join them. All are learners who have experienced limited prior schooling. For the remainder of the school day, the ELD class members return to their homerooms, where they are integrated with their peers and friends, and teachers accommodate or modify their programs, as needed.

## **What a literacy learning block looks like**

The ESL/ELD teacher chooses curriculum expectations and materials that support a study of Canada. Students might research to find out about individual provinces, weather patterns, geographic regions, cultural icons, or migration and settlement patterns of First Nation peoples prior to contact with Europeans.

Nicole is fascinated by life in the Arctic and wants to know more about modern Inuit communities. Qasim is interested in learning about hockey – he has seen it played on television and he has tried ball hockey with his new friends. Qasim is starting a short research report about the game.

Integrated units of study are an ideal way to build new knowledge and understandings. The content and materials are age-appropriate: high interest materials with a limited range of vocabulary are chosen by the teacher, with the assistance of the teacher-librarian. The teacher (and teaching partners) plan focused instruction using an integrated approach to develop reading and writing skills.

Each literacy learning block includes a teacher read-aloud. Today, the teacher initiates a discussion and invites personal opinions. Qasim and Nicole offer different perspectives and give reasons for their responses.

## A simple research process

### Materials

- Teacher- and student-selected print, electronic, and visual materials from many sources
- Fact sheets
- Research folders

### How it works

- The teacher helps students discuss and process what they see, read, and record while researching a specific topic.
- Students record what they learn on fact sheets, in short sentences, in their own words.
- Students regularly meet to share and discuss their knowledge.
- Once students and the teacher are satisfied that all the facts needed have been recorded on fact sheets, students are ready to put the information into categories.
- The teacher helps students choose categories for the facts collected. For example, in a project on Ontario, categories might include Animals, History, Farming and Food, or Winter Sports, depending on which specific facts students have collected.
- For each category, students choose a colour (e.g., all facts about farming and food are coded in green).
- Students place a green dot in the boxes of facts that have to do with farming and food.
- Students repeat this process for each category, until they have colour-coded all the facts.
- Next, students cut up all the fact sheets and glue them onto a fresh piece of paper, according to colour.
- With the facts for a particular category now on one page, students decide how to order, combine, and edit them, with peer and teacher support.

The result is a series of related paragraphs, in the students' own words, on a research topic.

Ways for students to use their paragraphs in a presentation:

- Create posters to accompany their research.
- Make an oral presentation (using cue cards, with jot-note prompts) about the poster.
- Prepare quizzes, using formats such as cloze, fill-in-the-blanks, and true/false, to "test" other students following the presentations.

### Literacy learning block planning tips

- Organize learning into small chunks in the literacy learning block.
- Allow for frequent, purposeful movement within and among learning groups (e.g., altering to meet changes in programming needs).
- Allow for some self-selection, as well as teacher-selection, of learning groups.
- Provide daily read-alouds in both fiction and non-fiction.
- Integrate reading and writing activities from the beginning.
- Develop critical thinking skills (e.g., use news items for daily discussion, create links to prior knowledge of world events).
- Teach language that allows students to ask for clarification, so that they can monitor their own learning.
- Incorporate opportunities for peer support in L1, where possible.

For further information, see *A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6: Volume One – Foundations of Literacy Instruction for the Junior Learner*, 2006.

#### Insight

The predictability of a writing workshop is a tremendous boon to English language learners because once the child has learned how she is expected to act on a given day during the mini-lesson, the conference, the writing time, and the other structures of the writing workshop, then she will know how to act every day.

L. Calkins et al., *The Art of Conferring with Young Writers*, p. 127

### What a numeracy learning block looks like

Each student works on an individual mathematics program that has been designed to reach back and cover the key concepts needed for a solid foundation. Nicole is currently developing her mathematics problem-solving skills, and she uses a calculator and manipulatives to support her learning of computation skills. In addition, the teacher creates mini-units that will work for the wide range of learners in the ELD class – units that combine learning covered in the curriculum over several grades.

Nicole knows that the teacher will confer with each student individually during the numeracy learning block to clarify language and concepts, take up homework, and provide a mini-lesson, as needed. Nicole is writing her reflections about division patterns in her mathematics journal, following a graphic organizer. While she works independently, Qasim asks Nicole to show him how to build a specific geometric solid, using interlocking pieces. With help, Qasim finds out what his completed triangular prism should look like by checking in the mathematics picture dictionary. Two other students work together at the computer, discussing what they learn as they follow an interactive software program.

Students often provide informal mini-lessons to their peers. An excellent way to determine if students have fully understood a concept learned earlier in the year is to observe whether they can teach it to other students. In addition, as students ask others for information, they take ownership of their own learning. By monitoring the students' discussions about their learning, the teacher can easily determine when a group of students needs explicit teaching or review of a concept.

### The mathematics and literacy connection

Mathematical literacy is closely related to literacy. While literacy is the foundation for all learning, mathematical literacy is also necessary if we are to understand fully the information that surrounds us in modern society.

*Leading Math Success – Mathematical Literacy Grades 7–12: The Report of the Expert Panel on Student Success in Ontario, p. 24*

"When I do math, I still think in my first language."

A teacher who has been in Canada for 12 years

Some ideas for including standard measurement in an integrated unit about Canada:

- Record (and predict) daily temperatures as an introduction to integers.
- Write your own mathematics problems based on historical events.
- Measure the length of a school hall, check the Internet to find out if a blue whale would fit in it, and find out how many of you would equal the mass of that blue whale.
- Walk a kilometre as a class, and use a trundle wheel to measure the distance. How long did it take? How many kilometres is it across Canada, from east to west? From north to south? How far did Terry Fox run each day?

#### Numeracy learning block planning tips

- Focus on problem-solving skills in all strands of mathematics.
- Teach and encourage calculator use to bridge learning of computation skills.
- Use calculators for estimation, patterning, and confirmation.
- Use manipulatives such as pattern blocks, algebra tiles, tangrams, and geometric solids.
- Encourage dialogue in L1 and English in learning groups to clarify concepts.
- Model language/vocabulary that students are expected to use.
- Provide visual representations of mathematics (e.g., models, charts, formulae).
- Teach how to organize a notebook, demonstrating the process and showing the steps.
- Track student learning from drawings and reflections about their personal learning that they recorded, using sentence starters, paragraph stems, and new vocabulary, in their mathematics journals.

For further information, see *A Guide to Effective Instruction in Mathematics, Kindergarten to Grade 6 (Volumes One to Five)*

## Predictable, inviting classroom routines

The teacher's task is to develop a cooperative team of engaged, interdependent learners. Predictable routines and class rules are established at the beginning of the school year, with the input of all students, and are reviewed regularly throughout the year and when new students arrive in the classroom. Teacher expectations are explicit and achievable.

The basic principles of cooperative learning need to be explicitly taught and modelled. Classroom routines and expectations may be very different from any that Nicole or Qasim previously experienced. It may take time and practice for students to learn to interact positively in a way that values the needs and contributions of all group members.

Although the program in the learning block is highly structured, it is always open to opportunities for "teachable moments." Students are engaged in their own learning, and are aware that they have been placed in this congregated ELD class because they are capable learners who can benefit from an opportunity for accelerated learning.

Within the ELD classroom, Qasim, Nicole, and the other ELLs with limited prior schooling feel safe and can take risks to learn. The classroom is a welcoming, print-rich learning environment, with structured and predictable routines. Learning materials are easily accessed, and students are free to move purposefully within the classroom. Talk for learning is valued and encouraged. Students are involved in decision making. Flexible groupings for learning tasks allow opportunities for developing interpersonal skills and for student engagement.

### Teacher Reflection

- What characteristics and needs in these examples of English language learners with limited prior schooling are similar to those of students in my class?
- How can I use this information in planning ways to support my students?

### The student planner

The student planner is a vehicle for communication between home and school. Early in the year and when a new student joins the class, the teacher lets the parents know how much she values their partnership in their child's learning. The student records his/her homework daily, and the parents sign the planner after the homework is completed. When the teacher checks the homework the next day, she signs it to indicate that the homework was completed. In this way, parents are aware, on a daily basis, if their child is working to expectations. The planner also provides an ideal forum for the teacher and parents to write short notes to each other, ensuring ongoing communication.

## Secondary

When English language learners with limited prior schooling arrive in Ontario secondary schools, they face significant challenges in accelerating their academic learning and in establishing goals for their future, all within a limited timeframe. Helping students see the growth in their own literacy and numeracy skills and keeping them focused on their learning goals is paramount to their success. Schools must find creative ways to help these students bridge the large gaps in academic learning caused by their life experiences.

The most significant challenge for schools may be to design a program that meets the needs of this target group in the context of a wide range of local needs and conditions. Depending on local circumstances (e.g., the distribution and number of students requiring ELD, the size of the school board), one or more of the following program models may be appropriate.

### Local school ESL/ELD delivery model

- The number of students is sufficient to sustain a full-service program, delivered by qualified ESL/ELD teachers in an ESL/ELD program.
- The school offers a range of ESL and ELD courses.
- The school offers a range of other credit courses adapted to the needs of English language learners (e.g., geography, history, science).
- The school offers locally developed courses adapted for ELLs with limited prior schooling and/or interdisciplinary studies courses, combining ELD courses with other subject disciplines.

In this model, it is possible to cluster the learners by level into the appropriate ELD course for up to half a day, along with an adapted course or locally developed and/or interdisciplinary studies course for English language learners with limited prior schooling, and still provide integration with peers for at least one period per day – all within the neighbourhood school. It is important to note that the student will be integrated for increasing amounts of time as the student develops English language proficiency and becomes more accustomed to school in Ontario.

## Congregated school delivery model

- The number of students in a secondary school is not sufficient to sustain a full-service program for ELLs with limited prior schooling that includes ELD courses. Learners are congregated in a magnet school which serves students from the surrounding geographical area.
- The school contains an ESL/ELD department with qualified ESL/ELD teachers.
- The school offers a range of ESL and ELD courses.
- The school offers a range of other credit courses adapted to the needs of English language learners (e.g., geography, history, science, civics, career studies).
- The school offers locally developed courses adapted for English language learners with limited prior schooling and/or interdisciplinary studies courses combining ELD with other subject disciplines.

In this model, it is possible to cluster the learners by level into the appropriate credit ELD courses for up to half a day, provide an adapted course or locally developed course and/or interdisciplinary studies course, and provide integration with peers for at least one period per day. For some students, it would mean travelling outside the neighbourhood to the magnet school.

## A reception program for newcomers

- Boards with very small numbers of ELLs with limited prior schooling may have to concentrate their resources and offer a reception program for newcomers to meet specific ELD needs as a *planned short-term or interim/transitional measure*.
- The number of students in a particular school board, geographical area, or individual school is not sufficient to sustain ELD courses in a local school or congregated delivery model.
- The combined literacy and numeracy needs are so significant that they cannot be met by a resource support delivery model.
- The program is delivered by qualified ESL/ELD teachers with experience teaching students with limited prior schooling and by subject teachers with ESL/ELD qualifications and a broad range of curriculum experience.
- The program is supported by readily available first language tutors, interpreters, guidance counsellors, and settlement workers.

In a reception program for newcomers, it is possible to offer a specialized academic learning environment that allows students to begin to develop literacy skills and, at the same time, reach back in content areas to begin to develop the skills required to enter other secondary programs. This program does not usually allow for a wide range of adapted courses and, unless located in a secondary school, may not provide integration with peers.

## Types of support

Depending on the needs of individual students, one or more of the following types of support may be provided:

**Intensive support** is suitable for learners with minimal or no prior schooling who are in the early stages of learning English. The timetable for these students includes ELD courses and sections of courses in other subjects, adapted to meet the needs of English language learners. Interdisciplinary studies courses combining ELD with other subject disciplines may also be provided. These students should be integrated into at least one mainstream course (e.g., physical and health education) to provide balance in the program and opportunities for interaction with English-speaking peers. First language assistance may also be provided by teachers, trained and supervised tutors, or volunteers. Students benefit from the assistance of literacy coaches, student success teachers, guidance counsellors, and other specialized school personnel. Their progress is monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure consistent progress and timely transitions to suitable programs and courses.

**Partial support** is suitable for learners who have acquired skills in using English and a foundational level of literacy. Such students take ELD courses, progressing to ESL courses at the appropriate level, and special sections of other subjects adapted for English language learners. As they narrow the academic gap, they take an increasing number of mainstream courses – ones that best suit their language needs and educational and career goals – in other compulsory subject areas, at appropriate grade levels. They benefit from the assistance of literacy coaches, student success teachers, guidance counsellors, and other specialized school personnel. They are monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure consistent progress, continued success, and timely transitions to ESL and mainstream programs.

**Tutorial support** for learners who are enrolled in a full program of mainstream courses may be provided by an ESL/ELD resource teacher, subject teachers, and peer tutors. This type of tutorial support is suitable for learners with limited prior schooling who still require monitoring. These learners have been fully integrated into the mainstream. They benefit from the assistance of literacy coaches, student success teachers, guidance counsellors, and other specialized school personnel. They are monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure consistent progress and continued success.

Some post-secondary programs may not recognize the OSSLC as the Grade 12 English entrance requirement.

## Suggested courses

### At the beginner level

- Core Courses: ELDAO – Level 1  
Locally Developed Compulsory Credit (LDCC) courses such as grade 9 mathematics and science (offered as 220-hour single credit courses)
- Support Courses: Guidance: Learning Strategies or Learning Skills courses
- Options: Other courses as appropriate and available
- Note: Courses can be offered as half credits to create ELD packages.

### Beyond the beginner level

- Core Courses: ELDBO – Level 2, ELDCO – Level 3  
LDCC courses (e.g., grades 9 and 10 mathematics and science, grade 10 history)
- Support Courses: Guidance: Learning Strategies or Learning Skills courses
- Options: Other courses as appropriate and available
- Note: Courses can be offered as half credits to create ELD packages.

A student who has completed the ELDEO (Level 5) course can move into the ESLDO (Level 4) course, where there is a more academic focus leading toward further education after secondary school. Much will depend on the individual student's ability and goals.

All students, including English language learners must successfully complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC). The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) is a full-credit course that fulfils the literacy requirement for graduation and can be counted as the compulsory English credit in either Grade 11 or in Grade 12. This course may be offered in special sections for English language learners.

*English Language Learners and ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.6.3.*

### Literacy skills course

When students are developing the literacy skills required in ELDDO (Level 4), it might be appropriate to offer them Literacy Skills: Reading and Writing, Grade 10, Open (ELS2O). This course could be adapted to provide literacy skill training for ELLs, and would provide excellent preparation for writing the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT).

See the *EQAO Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals, and Exemptions*, available online and *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9-12: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development, Revised, 2007*.

● **Samiya**, 15, was born in a refugee camp in Kenya. The camp had been the only home she had known. She came to Canada with her mother as part of a government resettlement program. During the initial assessment, it was evident that Samiya knew only a few words of English: hello, good-bye, yes, and no. She had not had the opportunity to learn to read and write her spoken language, Somali. However in the camp, she had learned to count and do single-digit addition and subtraction in her head.

### **Samiya's program**

- intensive support in a specialized ELD program
- a foundational mathematics course – Locally Developed Compulsory Credit Course, Mathematics, Grade 9
- an interdisciplinary studies course (adapted)
- social integration with her peers in a mainstream course without a high demand for English proficiency (e.g., visual arts)

### **Samiya's classroom**

Samiya attends a beginning literacy credit course (ELDAO – Level 1) in a congregated setting in a semestered secondary school. Her classmates, who all need intensive ELD instruction, are drawn from the immediate neighbourhood as well as from surrounding secondary schools. Her teacher is following the ELD AO curriculum expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9–12: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development*, Revised, 2007.

In period 3, Samiya attends a locally developed compulsory credit mathematics class where her teacher teaches foundational mathematics concepts in ways that make mathematics comprehensible. Manipulatives (e.g., bins of counters placed in the centre of each group, number lines taped to each desk) are essential equipment in this classroom. Students learn the names of common mathematics terms, how to count, add and subtract, and how to solve number problems. Samiya's previous experience with mental mathematics in the refugee camp has been a great asset to her as she draws on this knowledge to solve mathematical problems. Once again, oral language is a focus in this classroom, as Samiya's mathematics teacher builds oral and written vocabulary relevant to mathematics.

#### **Teacher Reflection**

- What characteristics and needs in this example of an English language learner with limited prior schooling are similar to those of a student in my class?
- How can I use this information in planning ways to support my student?

## Teaching beginning readers at the secondary level

For older beginning readers, an integrated approach works best. Talk is the foundation for instruction. The teacher adds each day's new vocabulary words and reviews the words from previous lessons posted on a chart visible to all students. The chart becomes an important source of classroom reading for beginning students. The teacher labels virtually everything in the classroom, and students make personal dictionaries which are added to their portfolios.

The students' perceptions of themselves and their learning depend on the teacher providing reading material that is accessible and age-appropriate. Read-alouds, shared and guided reading instructional strategies work extremely well when the content selected reflects their maturity, e.g., interaction with age-appropriate non-fiction, graphic texts, wordless books, and environmental print.

Older students are supported and motivated by their general knowledge, their oral language, and by literacy skills they acquired in their first language. They are beginners, but beginners with a lifetime of interesting experiences to bring to the task. Once they see themselves as readers and begin to read, there is no stopping them. Students' responses to texts can more accurately reflect their age and maturity levels with the help of tutors or volunteers who speak their first language.

### Supporting reading

- Provide a selection of reading materials for student choice, at a range of reading levels.
- Appeal to their interests in sports, popular culture, fashion, technology, news, and particularly to their life experience and their knowledge of other countries.
- Provide time for students to read every day – even if they are looking at pictures, they are practising “reading” as a habitual and accustomed part of their experience.
- Support cognitive growth and the development of confident, engaged learners through age-appropriate discussion and reflective talk about what is read.

Language experience stories are very useful tools for teaching reading at the beginning level. The teacher records the stories on charts that are re-visited many times, and tapes the stories so that students can listen to them in the classroom or at home. The teacher sometimes cuts the sentences apart so that students can work in pairs or individually to put the sentences together and read them aloud. Each student compiles a portfolio of printed copies of the language experience stories and activities of the day, so that progress over time is evident. Activities often include matching and categorizing vocabulary, as well as cutting and pasting sentence strips, so that students can develop oral, reading, and writing skills. Phonemic awareness is part of learning to read. This can be accomplished by calling attention to the words used in the stories, and explicitly focusing on the sounds they make and the patterns representing those sounds.

### A practical guide for developing a language experience story

- With the students, list vocabulary words they know that will be part of the story.
- Develop the story with the students, step by step. Record the story as simply as possible by printing on lined chart paper.
- When the story is finished, read it aloud with students, using your finger to track the words. Read slowly, but with normal intonation and rhythm. Do this several times, allowing students to volunteer to track the words, and take turns reading parts of the story.
- Have the story typed or have students copy the story so that each student can have a copy to add to their portfolio. Sometimes students who take computer classes volunteer to type the stories. The computer teacher may be happy to collaborate and incorporate this task into the course.

#### Extending the learning

- Add the new vocabulary to the word wall and make a set of flash cards with the new words. The cards can be used for concentration games, assessment, and review.
- Use the story in multiple ways depending on the needs and interests of the class. Reread the story several times over the following days, developing phonemic awareness skills, drawing attention to aspects of language such as capital letters, words beginning with certain sounds, word endings, punctuation, words that are related (e.g., small, smallest). Extend students' understanding of language by encouraging them to volunteer other words they know that are similar or follow the same pattern. Make sentence strips and have the students work in pairs to sequence the story. Make cloze activities based on the story by deleting some of the words.
- Invite students to take the printed copy home and retell the story to family members.
- Make an audio version of the story and encourage students to listen to it at home. Have students record their readings of the story by themselves, in pairs, or in small groups, trying to match the intonation and rhythm of the original.
- Celebrate the story. Add digital pictures to the story and turn it into an electronic presentation. Assemble it as a storybook for the classroom or school library. Organize an event where students invite other classes, teachers, or family members to see the presentation, or have a book launch during which the book is added to the school library.
- Add newly created language experience stories to the students' portfolios and encourage them to revisit these stories.

Language experience usually begins with students contributing words they know, and the teacher supplementing a little, as long as the words are primarily the students'. Then, the teacher prints the words verbatim.

For their own stories, students can include pictures and drawings, labelling them and adding captions and interesting animation.

### Collaborative learning activities

In a secondary ELDCO (Level 3) class, I asked students what they would be most interested in learning about, and tried to incorporate many of their suggestions into literacy-building activities. Several students wanted to learn about the game of hockey, so we investigated the rules, the equipment, and also some higher-order thinking about the place of hockey in the Canadian cultural landscape. I intentionally incorporated interactive and collaborative learning strategies in the unit.

The vocabulary was narrowed to a list of equipment, actions, and rules that were key to basic understanding. These were then pre-taught and added to the word wall. I assembled some cooperative learning packages where students would need to work together to complete tasks that included labelling visuals, identifying sports actions, and sequencing stories. In one class, we mimed the motions of skating, shooting, and blocking shots, and people had to find the right words to describe each action. Students practised sports conversations, such as “Did you see the game last night?” Writing was incorporated as students explained a rule, wrote about sports they played, or wrote definitions that we used as riddles to identify vocabulary. We wrote interview questions together and came up with different responses.

In the collaborative learning activities, students had opportunities to work together to accomplish a task, with minimal teacher direction. They had had very little experience with this type of learning, and we had to set some clear guidelines for behaviour. They learned some ways to respond to peers that would encourage rather than end discussion. Students enjoyed the interactive nature of the learning, and they began to transfer some strategies to everyday interaction. The unit gave us many opportunities to discuss and understand social interaction in new ways.







## Supporting transitions: Whole school, whole system

### CONTEXT

- Equitable outcomes are the goal for every student.
- Schools collaboratively plan opportunities and provide supports needed by ELLs with limited prior schooling to achieve success and meet their educational and career goals.
- Schools and boards help ELLs with limited prior schooling identify a variety of learning options critical to their success.
- Schools and boards implement programs and services to support successful transitions for English language learners with limited prior schooling.

Additional support should be provided through an intensive program designed to accelerate the student's acquisition of proficiency in everyday and academic English and the appropriate knowledge and skills of literacy and numeracy.

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.3.2.*

## Transitions

English language learners with limited prior schooling should have access to programs and support in all grades to help them achieve their goals, make transitions, and follow their chosen pathways to the future.

### Elementary to secondary school

Schools should establish protocols for easing the transition for English language learners with limited prior schooling between elementary and secondary school. For example, teachers from secondary schools are given time to visit the elementary feeder schools to confer about the incoming Grade 9 students and to meet these students. Later in the school year, these teachers are given time to share information about recent arrivals to the elementary school.

Prior to selecting their courses, students moving from elementary to secondary school should have the opportunity to explore secondary school options with support from teachers and parents.

### Beyond secondary school

It is important that schools provide comprehensible information about the full range of career possibilities available, and that English language learners with limited prior schooling have support in exploring various career opportunities and educational experiences that will help them achieve their career goals. Often ESL/ELD teachers, classroom teachers, cooperative education teachers, and guidance counsellors work collaboratively to inform learners and their parents of these opportunities. Individual boards should develop specific protocols that meet the needs of their community.

#### Insight

One of the most important distinguishing factors seems to be between those students who have some native language literacy and some mastery of academic content and those who have no such skills. Immigrant students with some academic skills are often able to make up the years that they lost to poverty or political strife ... [with] concentrated coursework in content areas that is adapted to meet their language needs. In contrast, immigrant students lacking rudimentary literacy skills in their native language are especially challenged in secondary school and may need many years of intensive work in order to graduate or make the transition to an appropriate program."

B.J. Mace-Matluck, R. Alexander-Kasparik, & R.M. Queen, *Through the Golden Door*, p. 13

## Programming Transitions

### ELD to ESL program

For information on how most English language learners may progress through their ESL and/or ELD courses and into mainstream English courses, see *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9–12: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development, Revised, 2007*, p. 14. For example, ELDEO prepares students for ESLDO and to transition to some mainstream English courses. Not all students will follow the sequence exactly, and individual students will vary in how they progress through the levels.

### Integration into a mainstream program

Integration into mainstream classrooms should be an ongoing process, and the amount of integration should increase over time as students become more proficient in English. If ELLs arriving with commensurate levels of education require five to seven years to develop academic language proficiency, then ELLs who have had their formal schooling interrupted or have had no opportunity for schooling will require more time to catch up to their age peers. The process will be different for each individual.

For information on secondary school graduation requirements and substitution for compulsory courses, see *English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007*, 2.6.1 to 2.7.

### Cooperative education and other workplace experiences

English language learners need special consideration and support to take advantage of the opportunities offered by cooperative education and other workplace experiences. Their level of proficiency in English and their experience in Canadian society must be considered to place them appropriately in cooperative education, work experience, and community service programs. The adults with whom students will interact need to be sensitive to the students' needs as newcomers to Canada. Some students may benefit from being placed with mentors from their own culture who can serve as role models and who can provide support and guidance in the students' first language as well as in English.

## Planning for future transitions

As students develop confidence and independence in learning, and as their English language skills develop, they need support in planning for future transitions.

● **Jing Le**, 12, came from China, and her first language is Mandarin. She has made progress with specific, targeted instruction in a congregated literacy program. Two years after she arrived, Jing Le is in Grade 7, and her reading level has moved from Grade 1 to Grade 5. She continues to require modifications in reading and writing within content areas, but she has completed tests orally and shows great capacity to remember facts and concepts. Her numeracy skills have shown similar progress, and she demonstrates her understanding of mathematics concepts using manipulatives. Jing Le will be fully integrated during her Grade 8 year, with regular ELD support. She continues with her home reading program, and her parents are very supportive, having her read to them and to her younger sister. She is a regular visitor to the library.

In discussion with the school, Jing Le's parents agree that after Grade 8, she will transition to the magnet secondary school in her community which offers a wide variety of adapted courses for English language learners. After completing a number of ELD courses, she will be able to move into ESL courses and then transition to mainstream English courses.

The challenge for Jing Le is to be patient with her progress. She continues to be a positive and eager student, with a good self-image. She has made great strides in covering the language learning and literacy development and the content learning of at least two academic years in one year. Jing Le has developed high expectations for herself which will help her as she continues her studies and in her career path.

● **Indra**, 15, has made steady progress since she arrived from Pakistan at the end of Grade 7, speaking only Urdu. She is gaining confidence in herself as a learner. Her progress was slow at first, but she completed Grade 8 and moved on to secondary school, where she took ELDBO (Level 2) in Grade 9, as well as other credit courses adapted to the needs of English language learners.

Now in Grade 10, Indra is in ELDCO (Level 3). Originally, she wanted to be a doctor; however, after exploring a number of health-related careers in her Grade 10 Career Education course, she is considering other options in this field. Indra, her parents, and her teachers have discussed the possibility that she will spend more than four years in secondary school, accumulating her credits and developing her skills.

• **Jordan**, 17, the eldest son in a Jamaican family with six siblings, speaks a variety of English. He attended school sporadically, since he was often required to work to help his family. He spent several years living with and caring for his grandmother before coming to Ontario where he now lives with his aunt.

Jordan attends a congregated ELD program in a secondary school. When he arrived, he had never attended secondary school, so he was enrolled in Grade 9. Reading and writing were challenges. With the help of an intensive reading and writing program much of which he did using computers to organize and present his work, he started to make real progress.

In Grade 11, he completed all his ELD courses, and made the transition to the ESL program. To further develop his reading and writing skills, he decided to spend at least one additional year in secondary school. While they were reviewing graduation requirements, Jordan's guidance counsellor reminded him that three of his ESL/ELD credits counted as compulsory English credits. He intends to complete his remaining English credit from one of the compulsory English courses offered in Grade 12 that will allow him to meet post-secondary entrance requirements. Jordan understands that he will need to take a Grade 11 compulsory English course to be well prepared for the Grade 12 course.

While in the cooperative education program, Jordon identified other skills and abilities that were documented on his Ontario Skills Passport – confidence in approaching new tasks, positive attitude, initiative, team work, effective use of time, reliability, and organization skills.

As his goals became clearer through his placements, he started to focus his future plans on computer-related careers.

#### **Teacher Reflection**

- What characteristics and needs in these examples of English language learners with limited prior schooling are similar to those of students in my class?
- How can I use this information in planning ways to support my students?

## Supportive transitions

Supportive transitions depend on educators sharing information about effective programming and demonstrated success. Teachers, support staff, and administrators must work together to find innovative ideas and solutions to meet the needs of these students.

- **Build cross-curricular connections:** Partner classes with the ELD class to share information or work together on a project (e.g., the history class researching immigration; the civics class inviting the ELD class to a presentation on the structure of the Canadian government).
- **Use former students as role models:** Invite former students who have continued on to jobs or to post-secondary study to share their stories and experiences.
- **Build a personal portfolio:** Have each student develop and maintain a personal portfolio that includes a résumé, samples of achievements, a checklist of future goals and interests, visits to colleges, community employers, etc.
- **Initiate leadership opportunities:** Look for ways in which students can profile their strengths within and beyond the school (e.g., help with a club or event; volunteer at a local or in-school event; visit an adult ESL class to talk about what it's like in a secondary school in Ontario; act as student ambassadors for students new to the school).
- **Partner with the elementary school:** Plan innovative ways for students to share their knowledge and expertise with younger children (e.g., act as a guide for parents at the school's open house; work on a project or volunteer for after-school homework clubs).
- **Partner with colleges and universities:** Access tutors, speakers and mentors; arrange for tours or for attending events as ways to familiarize students with the facility.
- **Partner with continuing education:** Partner classes with adult ESL/LINC\* classes for special projects or events; arrange innovative after-school or summer programs to address needs of the community. \*Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada.
- **Partner with community:** Identify and establish connections in the local community to find ways to support students.

## Considerations

English language learners with limited prior schooling should have access to post-secondary education. They may need support to investigate post-secondary options and opportunities that they might otherwise overlook.

ELLs with limited prior schooling may complete their program without graduating from secondary school. As lifelong learners, they can build on their foundational literacy skills. Students who are sufficiently mature and have developed skills that allow them to enter the workforce should be regarded as having reached a significant milestone in their education. They need to realize that there may be multiple opportunities to further their formal education in the future.

Where students are concerned about their age in comparison to their peers, adult education programs might be an option. Online courses, paid internships, alternative education (e.g., Frontier College), adult literacy programs, and community volunteer work are also ways in which they can acquire skills and build self-confidence.

Students who obtain their diploma/certificate and find employment must equally be considered a success.

*Building Pathways to Success, Grades 7–12: The Report of the Program Pathways for Students at Risk Work Group, p. 10*

### Insight

For ELLs with limited prior schooling, schools need to consider the messages that they send about success. The most important message that schools can instil in all students is to find their strengths and interests, and look for opportunities in areas that will be satisfying and rewarding. Whether a student proceeds immediately after secondary school to a new educational venture is less important than the student's view of himself or herself as a lifelong learner.

## A whole school approach

Creating a welcoming and inclusive school environment for English language learners and their families is a whole-school activity, requiring the commitment of the principal and vice-principal, teachers, support staff, and other leaders within the school community. The reward for this committed effort is a dynamic and vibrant school environment that celebrates diversity as an asset and enriches the learning experiences for all students.

Ontario Ministry of Education, *Many Roots, Many Voices*, p. 36

## **Strategies for supporting English language learners with limited prior schooling**

### **Create an inclusive, thoughtful school**

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- Ensure that the school recognizes students in its environment, activities, and messaging.
- Build an inclusive learning environment, with expectation of equitable outcomes.
- Design integrated activities, with recognition of good citizenship and school contributions.
- Establish timetables that provide flexibility, support, and integration at appropriate times and in appropriate settings during the school day.
- Develop pathways to success for these learners (e.g., expanded cooperative education, school-created programs, online courses, dual-credit programs).

### **Foster a collaborative team**

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- Work as a school-based literacy team, including representation from ESL/ELD teachers, to plan and implement programs and allocate resources to address learners' needs.
- Use a school support team approach to provide access to a full range of support services (e.g., international language teachers, first language interpreters, paid and supervised tutors, literacy coaches, student success teachers, guidance counsellors, settlement workers, psycho-educational consultants).
- Develop leadership and build capacity as a whole school to advocate for and address the needs of these students.
- Encourage new ideas and problem solve together to support the success of these learners.

### **Promote improved learning**

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- Include English language learners with limited prior schooling as a focus in the school improvement plan.
- Implement an effective plan for initial and ongoing assessment as part of assessment for learning (e.g., collecting student work samples and their portfolios).
- Use appropriate criteria and strategies to track students' development of proficiency in English over time (e.g., curriculum policy achievement charts).
- Track students' progress and monitor their academic achievement (e.g., using a database, summaries of progress in their Ontario Student Record – OSR).
- Plan instruction, based on research, to address specific needs or gaps in learning.
- Acquire resources that have direct links to curriculum and that are accessible at a variety of reading levels.

### Build a learning community

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- Be proactive and innovative in developing a variety of possible supports (e.g., using volunteers and community resources, establishing multi-board and university/college partnerships with a focus on English language learners).
- Provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with other schools and boards (e.g., shared professional learning activities, professional online dialogue).
- Work with community groups to determine what school-based supports parents feel are needed (e.g., nutrition programs, homework clubs, dental screening).
- Link to Citizenship and Immigration Canada and other government programs to provide support for newcomers.

### Engaging and supporting parents

Everyone in the school needs to make parents feel welcome. Educational research shows that children are more successful when their parents are involved in their education. It is important to reassure parents about the value of maintaining their first language and culture to support their children's development. Schools should also encourage parents to learn as much as possible about the education system, support programs, and the expectations of schools in Ontario.

### Effective communication

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- Provide general information in a language(s) and format(s) that is accessible to parents (e.g., visuals as well as print).
- Provide information, in the parents' first language, that describes ELD/ESL programs and their benefits, and includes procedures for entering the program and transitioning to other programs as students require less support and move into the mainstream.
- Explain the policies and procedures regarding assessment, evaluation and reporting.
- Inform parents of the school's policy and procedures regarding homework, the purpose of the student planner, when to expect report cards, and the dates for parents' nights.
- Provide interpreters, whenever possible.
- Encourage parents to speak with a teacher or guidance counsellor when they have questions or concerns about the program or their child's progress.

Some students may not be in Canada with their parents. Some older adolescents may be responsible for younger siblings.

### Develop an inclusive school community

- Encourage parents to participate as fully as possible in the life of the school (e.g., parent-teacher interviews, volunteering or participating in school functions, field trips).
- Encourage parents to participate in School Council or parent committees.
- Reach out, through settlement workers or personal contacts, to invite parents who might not respond to print invitations.
- Offer Family Literacy Nights.
- Build a network of parent volunteers.

### Build supports in the community

- Investigate supports for parents in the community (e.g., settlement programs, YMCA/YWCA, the local Chamber of Commerce, community associations).
- Work with settlement workers to provide information about the education system and the school.
- Involve community agencies, where appropriate (e.g., for dental or vision screening).

## Role of literacy leaders

Successful literacy learning is a team effort, requiring the support of the whole learning community – including teachers, at all grade levels, school administrators, support staff, the board, parents, and community members.

M. Fullan, R. Dufour, & R. Eaker in *Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6*, p. 13

Literacy leaders have a key role to play in supporting ELLs with limited prior schooling.

### Increased system understanding

- Provide positive school-level and/or system-level leadership.
- Act as a literacy resource for teachers of ELLs with limited prior schooling.
- Share current research and practice about literacy development.

### Differentiated assessment

- Help teachers implement assessment for learning strategies that are appropriate for individual ELLs with limited prior schooling (e.g., by building professional learning communities that include teacher moderation and sharing successful assessment practices).

### **Shared expertise and collaboration**

- Help teachers design instruction that improves students' ability to read, increases their academic vocabulary, and develops their higher-order thinking skills.
- Share instructional strategies that enable teachers to differentiate effectively for students' range of prior learning and skills.
- Share literacy strategies that will help make content comprehensible for ELLs (e.g., using graphic organizers, word walls, student-created dual-language books).
- Develop collaborative team relationships among the many educators who share responsibility for ELLs.
- Encourage ESL/ELD teachers and content-area teachers to work together to support these learners.

## **A whole system approach**

School boards must articulate a system-wide plan that addresses the needs of ELLs, including those with limited prior schooling. Following are considerations to guide this planning.

As part of the Board Improvement Plan and the Student Success/Learning to 18 Action Plan, all boards will include a section that addresses the needs of English language learners.

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.1.1.*

### **Data gathering**

- Analyze data gathered about ELLs with limited prior schooling from all schools and use it to inform board planning for programs and services for these students

### **System planning**

- Examine all policies for inclusiveness, and re-evaluate with careful scrutiny to reflect changing community demographics.
- Identify gaps in programs and services for these students.
- Develop a board action plan that includes clear objectives, specific timelines, actions, resource requirements, communication strategies, and benchmarks for success.
- Allocate resources to support ESL/ELD programs and services.
- Implement transition planning for ELLs moving from elementary to secondary school and/or from secondary school to post-secondary destinations (e.g., system-wide professional learning with cross-panel school teams, create a board protocol document).
- Build effective programs that could include cooperative education, study skills courses, and literacy skills courses.

### **Site-based planning**

- Support the development of ELD/ESL programs within school plans (e.g., create literacy and numeracy learning blocks).
- Include flexible entry and exit points within school plans (e.g., late start to school year to accommodate seasonal work).
- Support flexible timetabling and program scheduling (e.g., a mix of full year and semester courses, adjust school schedules to provide time for teacher collaborative planning).

Funding provided under the ESL/ESD component of the Language Grant is expected to be used for programs and services that are designed to benefit English language learners.

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.11.1.*

### **Funding**

- Target funds to provide programs and services to support this small group of learners.
- Target funds for staff development, particularly for teachers who are working with older students in developing their literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills.

School boards will provide appropriate professional development opportunities to administrators, ESL/ELD teachers, classroom teachers, and support staff to support the implementation of this policy.

*English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.12.2.*

### **Staff development**

- Develop a system-wide professional learning plan for administrators, teachers, educational assistants, school staff, volunteers, and community partners.
- Provide targeted professional development to build cultural awareness in all staff.
- Build leadership capacity throughout the board.
- Build communication links to liaise with parents and other community partners.

For further information, see *English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007*.

## Role of the student success leader

The Student Success Leader plays a pivotal role in the system's support of ELLs with limited prior schooling.

### Developing board awareness

- Share information and professional learning about the ways in which ELLs with limited prior schooling are at risk.
- Bring information about this group of students to the attention of the board's administration and trustees.
- Make system-level leaders and principals aware of their responsibility to support this small group of students who have the potential to succeed once they have closed significant learning gaps.
- Create partnerships at the system level to provide this small group of learners with specific supports (e.g., involve cultural groups in the community).

#### Insight

All educators – classroom teachers, ESL/ELD teachers, teacher librarians, guidance counsellors, and administrators – must work together to help English language learners with limited prior schooling integrate successfully into the academic and social life of the school. The development of equitable outcomes for students requires a sustained and consistent approach, with ongoing professional dialogue and messaging on the part of senior administration.





## Resources

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### Websites and DVDs

English as a Second Language/English Literacy Development Resource Group of Ontario (ERGO). [www.ergo-on.ca](http://www.ergo-on.ca) Resources and guidelines to support ESL/ELD programs in Ontario.

ESL Infusion. <http://eslinfusion.oise.utoronto.ca> This site is for teachers working with English language learners in Ontario classrooms. Provides ideas for lesson adaptation and culturally sensitive teaching.

International Children's Institute. [www.icichildren.org](http://www.icichildren.org) Based in Montreal and Toronto, this organization supports the development of programs and services for children who are experiencing stress related to displacement, war, and immigration. Training workshops and materials are available for educators.

Internet TESL Journal. <http://iteslj.org> Site for teachers and learners. The section for students provides many online puzzles and other activities.

Minnesota Humanities Center. <http://www.thinkmhc.org/Literacy/tips.htm> Tips parents and caregivers on how to read with children; available in many languages

Multiliteracies Project. [www.multiliteracies.ca](http://www.multiliteracies.ca) This site documents a three-year Canadian research study about literacy and pedagogy in a pluralistic, technological society. The sample projects include dual-language books written by students.

Ontario Ministry of Education. [www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123) Tips for parents to help with reading, mathematics, writing, homework, and communicating with the teacher.

Ontario Skills Passport. <http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSPWeb/jsp/en/login.jsp> The skills described in the Ontario Skills Passport are the Essential Skills that the Government of Canada and other national and international agencies have identified and validated, through extensive research, as the skills needed for learning all other skills needed for work, learning, and life.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. [http://www.qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/supporting\\_evidence.pdf](http://www.qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/supporting_evidence.pdf) This site focuses on school-based assessment.

Settlement.org. [www.settlement.org](http://www.settlement.org) This site provides resources for newcomers and for the people who work with them. The cultural profiles available on this site provide useful background information for teachers and can also be used by students working on school projects. In the “Settlement Workers in

Schools" section of the site there are parent guides to Ontario schools, in various languages. There is also information about other resources, including an orientation video for newcomer youth in Ontario secondary schools. Videos on using public libraries and parent-teacher interviews are available.

Toronto District School Board. (2007). *Your home language: Foundation for success*. Home language DVD for parents, available in 13 languages, including English with captions.

### **Ontario Ministry of Education resources**

*6 Ways: Transforming High School in Ontario*, 2007.

*Building Pathways to Success, Grades 7–12: The Report of the Program Pathways for Students at Risk Work Group*, 2003.

*Combined Grades: Strategies to Reach a Range of Learners in Kindergarten to Grade 6*, 2007.

*Cooperative Education and Other Forms of Experiential Learning: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Secondary Schools*, 2000.

*Early Math Strategy: The Report of the Expert Panel on Early Math in Ontario*, 2003.

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