



English as an Additional Language Practice Guide

January, 2025

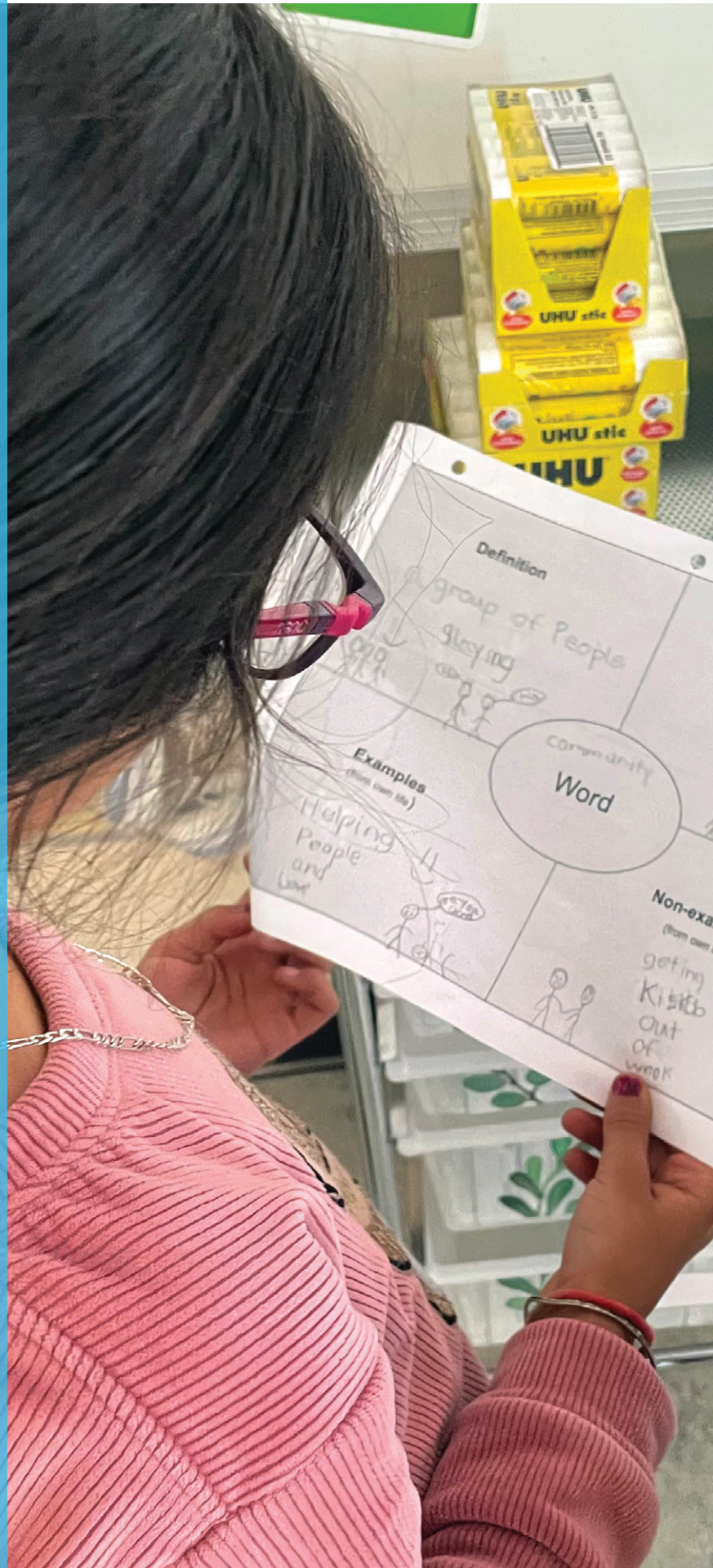
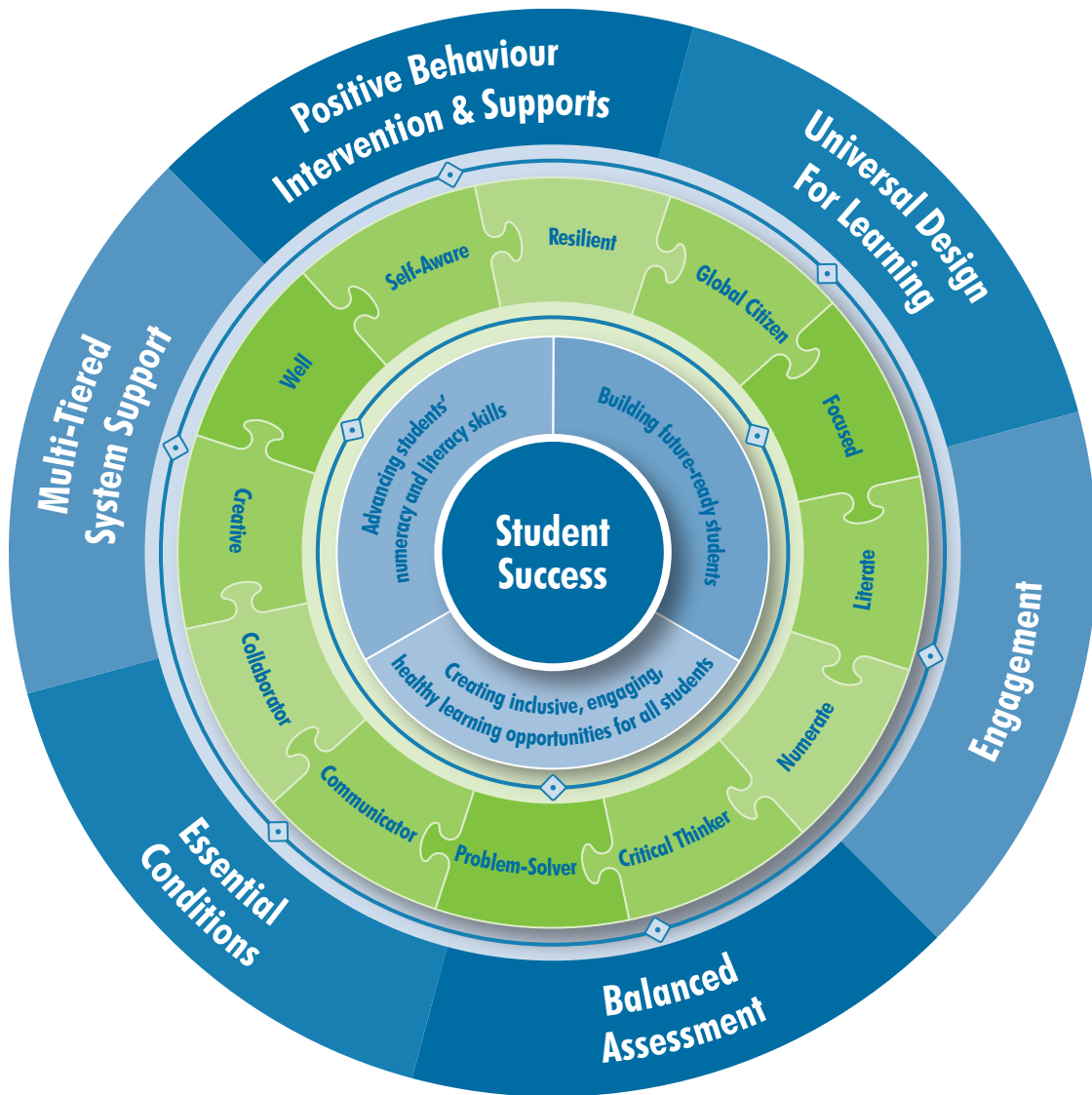


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Learning Model



Introduction

Rocky View Schools (RVS) is dedicated to serving a diverse student population, including those learning English as an Additional Language (EAL). Recognizing the importance of supporting these students, the district emphasizes effective, empathetic instruction to inspire and reward EAL learners, their peers and the educational community. All teachers are considered educators of English language and literacy, ensuring that instruction is tailored to meet individual needs, thus equipping students to meet Alberta's rigorous curriculum.

The success of EAL students in RVS is a collaborative effort involving teachers, administrators and parents. With this collaborative approach, we build bridges to academic and social-emotional success by employing evidence-based strategies, such as differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning and culturally responsive teaching. Targeted supports like sheltered instruction (teaching language through content curriculum), push-in small group support and co-teaching models are implemented to address specific language needs, fostering an environment that celebrates diversity and nurtures belonging.

The vision for EAL learning in RVS is centred on empowering students to be confident communicators in English while valuing their cultural backgrounds. This practice guide is a starting point for an equitable and multifaceted approach, integrating best practices in language acquisition, language learning and technology. This concerted effort aims to cultivate an environment where all students have equitable opportunities to excel academically and reach their full potential, irrespective of their language backgrounds, promoting inclusivity and diversity within the educational community.

School-Based EAL Coordinator

Every RVS school has a school-based EAL Coordinator (called ELL coordinator in Dossier) identified by their admin team. Responsibilities include:

- Ensuring they have administrator access in PowerSchool. This is granted by their admin team.
- Adding codes for all newly registered students, Grade 1 and Grade 3 French Immersion (FI) students.
- Creating ESL Benchmarks in Dossier for all new students in the Student Success Plans tab, toggle All ELL, then click the green + to create ELL Benchmarks. **If students arrive after Feb. 1, wait until the following year to code them.** Create a benchmark in Dossier, and ensure teachers use it to assess language proficiency and deliver targeted instruction and support.
- Assigning or unassign teachers responsible for completing the ESL Benchmarks in Dossier. (See [Appendix A: Who is most responsible for completion](#))
- Ensuring an ESL Benchmark is completed in Dossier by Sept. 27 for all new students, Grade 1 and Grade 3 FI (See [Appendix A](#)).
- Approving Final Summary ESL Benchmarks annually in Dossier by the last teacher workday in June (See [Appendix A](#)).
- Collaborating with school-based admin team and designated **EAL Specialist** to plan for embedded teacher professional learning throughout the school year.
- Disseminate district level EAL information to school staff.
- Communicating to teachers the need to retain evidence of student language proficiency relating to the benchmarks.

RVS EAL Timelines Based on Alberta Education’s Funding Model:

Assessment Schedule	
School-based EAL Coordinators are confirmed by school admin.	Sept. 18
As needed, an up-to-date ESL Proficiency Benchmark must be completed by teachers in Dossier for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who are new to Rocky View Schools • All Grade 1 students (except French Immersion Grade 1 and 2 students) • Grade 3 French Immersion students 	Sept. 27
ESL Benchmarks are updated and used by classroom teachers to inform their instruction. *Important* Evidence must be available to support the benchmark and code	Ongoing
High School: ESL Proficiency Benchmarks are completed in Dossier by teacher(s) who are directed by the EAL coordinator	Jan. 31
Students registered after Feb. 1 should not be coded until the next school year. Benchmarks should be used to assess proficiency and inform instruction.	Feb. 1 – June 30
All Final ESL Benchmarks must be reviewed, and “Final Summary” approved by the school-based EAL Coordinator so that they can be pushed to PASI/Alberta Education by the PS Team.	June 27

Initial Intake, Screening & EAL Code Assignment

Developing school-based family intake and day-one plans for students for whom English is an additional language is important. These plans help to set all shareholders up for success.

Information to be considered when welcoming new families

- Students may or may not be fluent and/or have strong literacy skills in all languages they speak.
- Some parents may hesitate to share their child's language, developmental or educational histories with their new school.
- Parents may identify that English is the main language spoken at home, even if another language is spoken.
- The student's home language may differ from the language of instruction at the student's previous school.
- Encourage families to maintain their home languages, as it has been proven to enhance English language acquisition and student success.
- Learn about cultural holidays or customs that are important to the family.

A strength-based approach leverages students' language backgrounds and background knowledge.

Resources to consider during intake:

- RVS: [Family Conference Questionnaire](#)
- EAL Toolkit: [Welcoming Families](#)

Student Intake Screening Assessment – EAL Coordinator

Initial Student Intake Screening Assessment should include at least one of the following:

- Oral language screening tool ([EAL Toolkit](#))
- An informal reading assessment with a low-stakes comprehension conversation
- Unedited writing sample ([See Student Writing samples](#))

Contact your designated EAL Specialist for support

If a language other than English is spoken in the home and the student requires additional language support, the EAL coordinator is to complete at least one strand in the ESL Benchmarks in Dossier, enter an **EAL code** in PowerSchool and retain evidence. The teacher must update/complete the Benchmarks within one month.

Placement

As a school team, decide on placement. Questions to consider during placement may include:

- Is there a class with other EAL students with similar language backgrounds?
- Is small group push-in support possible at your school?
- Are high school students eligible for credits from courses taken in their last school (credit transfer)?
- Are there locally developed courses to support English language learning needs?
- What is a timely school start date that best suits student needs and leaves time for intake and assessment?

Programming and Best Practices

Reflecting on School Practices – Resources for EAL Coordinators and Administrators

Before beginning a new school year, it is important to know who your students will be, who on staff has experience and what resources are available. This information will help you decide how to organize your school to effectively meet the needs of all students, including EAL learners. Use the following chart to reflect upon your school's readiness to meet the needs of your learners:

Reflecting on School Practices: Organizing for Instruction			
<i>1: not evident, 2: emerging, 3: evident</i>	1	2	3
The levels of the <i>Alberta K–12 ESL Proficiency Benchmarks</i> inform organizational decisions.			
Differentiated instructional practices are used with English language learners to support the acquisition of academic language necessary to access curricular content.			
Opportunities are provided for small group instruction for students at Levels 1, 2 and 3 for part of the day.			
Within the larger classroom, English language learners at Levels 1, 2 and 3 receive explicit language instruction appropriate to their proficiency levels.			
School staff collaborates to plan intervention and support for individual students who are having difficulties.			
Appropriate support is provided to students who have a background of limited formal schooling.			
Staff are organized to best meet the needs of English language learners in the classroom.			
Collaborative relationships with relevant community partners have been established to provide support to students and their families.			
Library and classroom materials reflect multiple perspectives and cultural and linguistic diversity.			
Library and classroom materials have curricular resources at a range of reading levels and appropriate interest levels.			
Home language supports, such as dual language materials or translation resources, are available.			
Access is provided to technologies, such as language learning software, text/speech tools and online resources.			

From https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/documents/organizing_for_instruction.pdf

Classroom Teachers – Tips for a Smooth and Welcoming First Day of School

Setting up your learner for their first day can promote feelings of safety and connection to the classroom community. Try these tips:

- Pair EAL learners with a supportive peer
- Facilitate connections with other students with similar language or cultural backgrounds
- Provide visual schedule and visual labelling where appropriate (instructions, bathroom card)
- Ensure the student has a tour of the school
- Smile and introduce yourself
- Learn how to pronounce the student's name correctly and consistently
- Meet the student at the office and ensure they find their parents/guardians at the end of the day
- Provide translation technology if available
- Research a few key phrases and post in a prominent place

See the [EAL Toolkit](#) for more information. Contact your school's EAL Specialist for professional learning and support.

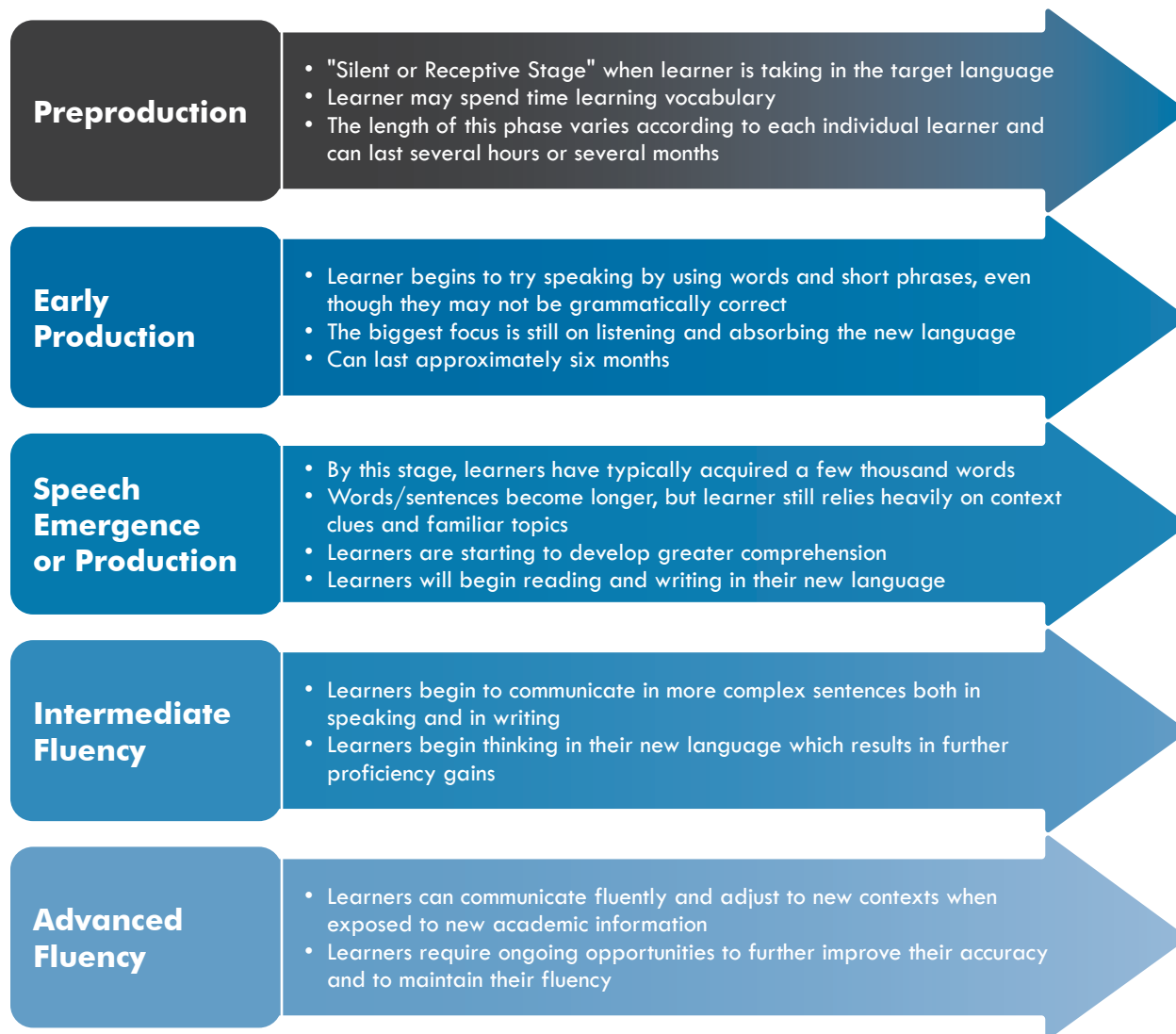
Gathering Classroom Data

Informal and formal assessments inform ESL Benchmarking and instructional design. A full ESL Benchmark should be updated/completed for all four strands (listening, speaking, reading and writing) within the first month the student attends the school. If the student is registered from September to January, this is done in Dossier. If the student is registered from February to June, they will not be coded, but a Benchmark should be created in Dossier and used to inform instruction and programming.

- Ensure triangulation of data – conversations, observations and products
- Be patient if students go through a silent period. Students often acquire receptive skills before expressive modes of communication
- Focus on outcomes – using translation technology, visuals and multiple means of expression to see what the student can do in relation to an outcome
- Use divisional assessments and culturally responsive tools (BAS reading assessment, ESL [Benchmarks](#), [RVS writing assessment](#), conferencing, etc.) over time to ascertain formative data to drive instructional decisions

Stages of Language Development

As with all learners, multilingual students arrive with various cultural and educational experiences that will influence their development. Where they lie on this continuum will help determine the appropriate programming for their success.



**Adapted from Ferlazzo & Hull Sypniewski (2022)*

Organizing Programming

Characteristics of Learners by Level of English Language Proficiency

EAL learners require different organizational structures and instructional supports based on their English language proficiency levels.

Level 1 Beginning	Level 2 Developing	Level 3 Expanding	Level 4 Bridging	Level 5 Extending
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New to English • Little or no exposure to English as a foreign language classes • Usually literate in first language • May have previously been a student who required English language and literacy development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginner with some prior English instruction • Has limited English proficiency • Usually has had previous schooling • Age-appropriate literacy in first language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have studied English in home country or had some schooling in Canada • May have been in Canada for some time with academic language gaps • Continue to require significant scaffolds, such as realia and visuals/ graphic organizers to access grade level content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening and speaking skills approaching native English speakers in conversational English; however, academic oral proficiency is developing in specificity and complexity • Reading and writing skills at grade with scaffolding, direct instruction and extra time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have studied English for several years (international or Canadian schools) May appear fluent in oral language or may be less fluent orally and more competent in reading and/or writing • Requires support and instruction to understand literature and cultural references, word choices and sophisticated grammatical structures

From: Alberta Education ESL Benchmarks

Learning Design Considerations by Current English Language Proficiency Level

	Pre-production LP 1	LP 2-3	LP 3	LP 4-5
Optional Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation technology • Google Read Write • Subtitles/closed caption • Speech translation (like Microsoft Translator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immersive Reader and other picture dictionaries/ translator • Google Read Write • Subtitles/closed caption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use online dictionaries • E-readers with built-in dictionaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use online dictionaries • E-readers with advanced dictionaries
Potential Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow use of home language • Permit audio, pictorial or video responses instead of writing to show understanding of outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation technology • Pictorial, audio and video responses with a blend of English and preferred language • Oral discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online dictionaries • E-readers with built-in dictionaries • Oral discussion before and after writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral discussion before and after writing • Peer editing and revision • Use online dictionaries • E-readers with advanced dictionaries
Supportive Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use clear, slow speech with visual aids and gestures; incorporate repetition • Visual schedule and instructions • Sharing circles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use clear speech with visual aids • Use graphic organizers and sentence frames • Practice note-taking and summarizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use guided reading focused on comprehension • Use graphic organizers, sentence frames and writing conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use academic discussions, debates and presentations • Graphic organizers before writing and after reading
Ideas For Independent Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use academic discussions, debates and presentations • Graphic organizers before writing and after reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to stories with visual aids; summarize key points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and summarize short stories and informational texts with support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to academic lectures and podcasts; summarize and discuss key points
Working On Words Like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic utility words (e.g., eat, drink) • Survival words (e.g., help, stop) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-frequency words (e.g., run, jump) • Basic utility words (e.g., open, close) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive words (e.g., big, small) • Instructional words (e.g., read, write) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced academic vocabulary (e.g., hypothesis) • Subject-specific terms (e.g., photosynthesis)

*Source: RVS EAL Team

A Quick Tour of EAL Best Practices

Do

Model for students what they are expected to do or produce, especially for new activities or skills, by explaining and demonstrating the learning actions, sharing your thinking processes aloud and showing samples of good teacher and student work. Effective modelling should make the expectations of a task clear and remain available for student access throughout the activity or task.

Speak clearly and slowly and provide students with enough time to formulate their responses whether in speaking or writing. **Providing five seconds of wait time** provides all students with an opportunity to think and process while increasing student participation, improving the quality of student response and developing learning while boosting self-efficacy.

Use visuals (pictures), sketches, gestures, intonation and other non-verbal cues to make language and content more accessible.

Give both verbal and written/pictorial instructions. This can help all learners.

Regularly check for understanding. After an explanation or a lesson, a teacher might say, “please put thumbs up, thumbs down or sideways to let me know if this is clear. It’s perfectly fine if you don’t understand or are unsure – I just need to know.”

Regular checks for understanding encourage students to become increasingly aware of monitoring their own understanding which can serve as a model for good study skills.

Encourage students to use their home language to support learning in your classroom. Make sure to have the appropriate bilingual dictionaries in your classroom and allow students to access technology to use for translation.

Provide students with graphic organizers to help them organize their learning, make connections between new and prior knowledge, support demanding cognitive and linguistic tasks, and promote active learning and engagement. Expose students to a variety of graphic organizers and have them reflect on which are most effective for their learning and why. Encourage them to create their own.

Remember the assets EAL students bring with them to school and to the community. The presence of immigrant students in a school has been shown to increase achievement for all learners.

Adapted from Ferlazzo & Hull Sypniewski (2022)

Appendix A – ESL Benchmarks Best Practices

All students with an ELL Code must have their English Language Proficiency assessed using the Alberta Education English as Second Language Benchmarks. This assessment must be completed in Dossier and supporting evidence retained by the teacher.

The benchmarks were designed for formative and ongoing use by teachers in the classroom context. In RVS, students' English Language Proficiency Levels are recorded electronically in the Dossier system under the tab ELL Benchmarks. Teachers are to choose the indicator that the student has achieved.

ESL Benchmarks

Benchmarks are designed for teachers to assess student language proficiency (in listening, speaking, reading, writing) in the classroom context.

- The language proficiency assessment information can be used to inform appropriate programming and instruction of EAL learners in all subject areas.
- Teachers assess language proficiency using Benchmarks by observing student learning interactions and by using authentic assignments and assessments (adapted for beginner language proficiency levels and differentiated as needed).
- Benchmark indicators identify next steps in language acquisition.
- A student is considered to have achieved a proficiency level when they have consistently demonstrated understanding and use of most indicators in that level in a variety of social and academic situations.
- Once a student has demonstrated most of the indicators in a level, they can be described as having achieved that level and working at the next level.
- Students may work at different proficiency levels in various competencies and strands (listening, speaking, reading, writing).
- Each level does not correspond to years of schooling in Alberta. An EAL learner may be at the same level for multiple years.
- The levels represent a continuum of language proficiency, and teachers should consult with colleagues and use professional judgment in interpreting and applying levels.

Adapted From: [Alberta Education](#)

Who is most responsible for completion?

- **Grades 1 – 6:** Ongoing benchmark assessments will typically be conducted by the homeroom teacher.
- **Grades 7 – 12:** The EAL coordinator and administration will determine which teacher(s) will be most responsible for completing the benchmarks. It is recommended that the teacher with the most exposure to the student's language proficiency complete the benchmarks with input from other teachers.
- Language instruction is the responsibility of all teachers, irrespective of discipline.

Evidence

Evidence of a student's language proficiency must be retained by the teacher to support the Benchmark Assessment for the current school year. The following are acceptable forms of evidence:

- Writing samples (such as the RVS writing assessment)
- An Oral Language Screening Assessment
- Teacher anecdotal notes against the Benchmarks

Appendix B – EAL Program Coding

Alberta Education EAL Program Coding:

All students with an EAL code **must** have an up-to-date ESL Proficiency Benchmark in Dossier with uploaded evidence included.

- **301: Foreign-born students** whose first language is not English and require English language supports.
- **302: Visiting students** (ex. International Students) whose first language is not English and require English language supports.
- **303: Canadian-born students** whose first language is not English and require English language support. This may include First Nations, Métis, Inuit, multilingual Hutterite or Mennonite students.

Additional Information:

- Kindergarten students are not to be coded and ESL Proficiency Benchmarks do not need to be created for them in Dossier. Please note that this also applies to any Kindergarten students who arrive with an EAL code from another district or a preschool program.
- Kindergarten teachers should maintain documentation of language acquisition (e.g., paper copy of benchmarks or tracking sheet) that can then be shared with students' Grade 1 teachers, when they will be coded if they meet the requirements.
- Students in FI programs are not coded until Grade 3.
- If a student has exhausted five years of funding and still requires English as an additional language support, leave the appropriate coding in PowerSchool and maintain the use of ESL Proficiency Benchmarks to inform the next steps in instruction.
- Obtaining parent permission for EAL coding is not required, although communication with the family is best practice.
- If a student is registered after Feb. 1, they should not be coded until the following school year. Teachers should maintain documentation around language acquisition (e.g., paper copy of benchmarks/tracking sheet) that can then be shared with students' next-year teachers.

Removal of an EAL Code

- Coding can be removed if a student has maintained a Language Proficiency 5 on all four strands of the ESL Proficiency Benchmarks for two consecutive years.
- Removal of an EAL code must be discussed with your school team and approved by school administrators. If it is determined that the EAL code should be removed for a student, the front office team can remove the EAL code. Please contact your EAL Learning Specialist if you require further consultation.
- Communication with the family about code removal is recommended, however, obtaining parent permission to remove EAL coding is not required.

Appendix C – External Agencies, Translation and Interpretive Services

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS)

Provides translation and interpretation services at a cost to the school

- Services can be in person, by phone or video call. Charges apply
- Submit an online request at www.ccisinterpretation.ca
- Phone: 403-606-6985

Rocky View Immigrant Services (RVIS)

Provide support to families who are newcomers to Canada.

- Families may be Permanent Residents, Temporary Foreign Workers, Refugees
- Can assist families and schools with registration, interpretation, language instruction and access to community support (financial, recreational, spiritual, mental health, food, etc.)
- Hold community events throughout RVS communities
- Locations in Cochrane, Chestermere and Airdrie

Contact RVIS

- Fleeha Ahmad (Airdrie and Cochrane Areas)
 - > Email: fahmad@ccisab.ca
 - > Phone: 403.604.2377
 - > Airdrie and area: <https://ccisab.ca/airdrie>
 - > Cochrane and area: <https://ccisab.ca/cochrane>
- Eryn Wahl (Chestermere and Area)
 - > Email: ewahl@ccisab.ca
 - > Tel: 403.629.7842
 - > Chestermere and area: <https://ccisab.ca/chestermere>

MCIS Language Solutions

Provides interpretation services over the phone, charged by the minute. This is not to be used for lengthy conversations or student-led conferences. An interpreter should be hired to come to the school in those instances.

- www.mcislanguages.com
- Phone: 1-888-990-9014
- Please contact your EAL learning specialist for more information.

Appendix D – Resources

For Schools

Professional Learning

- [EAL Toolkit](#) (ARPDC (Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia))

Information

- Alberta Teacher's Association [Working with Immigrant Students and Families](#)
- Alberta Education [What Administrators Need to Know About English Language Learners](#)
- Learn Alberta: [Supporting English Language Learners](#)
- Learn Alberta: [Encouraging the Use of Home Languages](#)
- Learn Alberta: [Understanding the Acquisition of English as an Additional Language](#)

Books

- Chval, K, & Smith, E. (2021). Teaching Math to Multilingual Students, Grades K-8. Corwin.
- Arnett, K., & Bourgoin, B. (2017). Access for Success: Making Inclusion Work for Language Learners (1st Ed.). Pearson Canada.
- Fenner, S, & Snyder, S (2024). Unlocking Multilingual Learners' Potential. Corwin.
- Ferlazzo, L., & Hull Sypnieski, K. (2022). The ESL/ELL Teacher's Survival Guide: Ready-to-Use Strategies, Tools, Activities for Teaching All Levels (2nd Ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Ferlazzo, L., & Hull Sypnieski, K. (2018). The ELL Teacher's Toolbox: Hundreds of Practical Ideas to Support Your Students. Jossey-Bass.
- Hammond, Z. L. (2015). Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain. Corwin Press.
- Snyder, S., Staehr Fenner, D. (2021). Culturally Responsive Teaching for Multilingual Learners: Tools for Equity. Corwin Press.

For Families

- [Action for Healthy Communities \(AHC\)](#) is a newcomer-serving organization funded through the Government of Canada's Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Department (IRCC). All their services are free of charge.
- Alberta Health Services [Mental Health Helpline](#) (Translation available for parents and students)
- [Alberta Health Services Help in Tough Times](#) (overarching look at all mental health resources available to support the mental health of evacuees, refugees, immigrants as well as for teachers and school staff)
- Government of Alberta. [Support for Ukrainians](#) (provincial services available to Ukrainian evacuees, including information on education in Alberta translated into Ukrainian)

Appendix E – Clarification of Acronyms

English as an Additional Language (EAL) – An up-to-date term used by RVS and Alberta Education as it is deemed to be more inclusive of students who may be learning multiple languages in addition to or before English.

English Language Learner (ELL) – Traditionally used to describe the learner rather than the program. This term is used less often as all learners are language learners

English as a Second Language (ESL) – Term traditionally used to describe a range of English programs. This term is used less often than ML or EAL, as English is a third or fourth language for many students. The Alberta Education - English as A Second Language use this terminology when referring to the original Benchmarks. Current information on Learn Alberta supporting use of Benchmarks 2.0 uses the term EAL.

Language Proficiency (LP) level – (eg. LP3) as described in the ESL Benchmarks

Multi-Lingual(s) (ML or MLs) – Often seen in literature and describes people who speak multiple languages.