

Creating Welcoming Classrooms for English Language Learners



**NEWCOMER
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Prairie Spirit School Division



**PRAIRIE SPIRIT
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Getting Started

Classroom Setup

- **Recognize other languages**

spoken in class. Encourage students to use their first language in the classroom when appropriate. This will help support their sense of identity and value the language they possess as well as create an environment that recognizes and celebrates others languages and cultures within the general classroom.

Language Wall

Encourage all students to learn some basic phrases in other language(s) by posting sentences in classroom.

English – How are you? English – Good morning
Spanish - ¿Cómo estás? Spanish – Buenas días

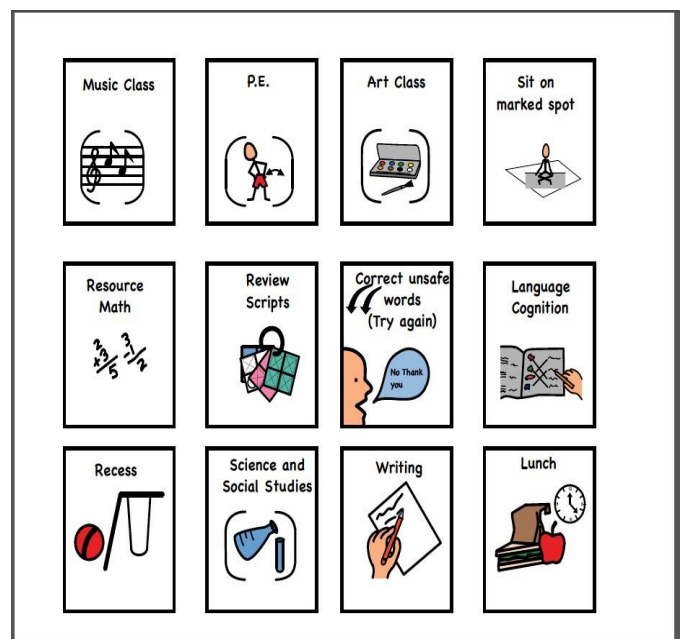
- **Gather language-learning materials** that the student can use independently or with a buddy. Such materials could include the following:

- picture books with accompanying tapes
- dual-language books
- mathematical activities
- interactive CD-ROMs
- games such as Concentration, Boggle, Scrabble, word searches, puzzles
- taped music, songs, chants, rhymes (with accompanying written text, if possible)

- **Use social stories, visual schedules and visual prompts** to help convey your messages and daily routines.

- Practice and use correct **punctuation of student's name.**

- **Assign a classroom partner** (if possible, of the same gender and with the same language background) to assist the student in adjusting to the school and class.



Getting Started

Classroom Setup

Survival Phrases

"Hello."
"Good morning."
"Goodbye."
"Where is...?"
"May I ...?"
"I don't understand."

Helping with English Vocabulary

Provide a bilingual and/or picture dictionary, picture cards, and a notebook or scrapbook in which the student can begin creating a personal dictionary.



The Role of First Language

Encourage the student to use their first language in journals, personal dictionaries, word lists, prewriting activities, and oral discussions, and for making notes and visual organizers and preparing outlines or drafts. Use of the first language as a tool for learning and thinking helps the student develop a strong foundation of knowledge and skills upon which English proficiency can be built.

Instructional Tips

Will You Please Teach Me Using These Strategies?



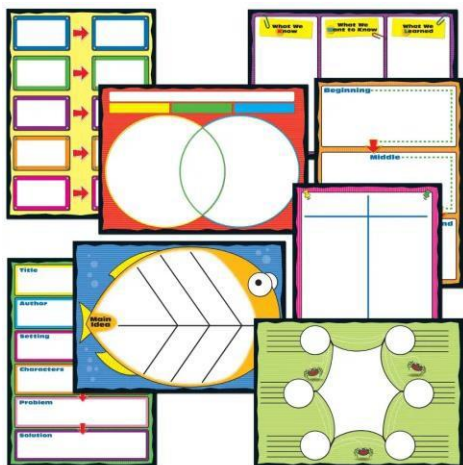
It is important for teachers to identify language that may be confusing to ESL/ELD/EAL students and to substitute clearer alternatives. Students learn language best when they can understand what is said by inference: that is, by making connections to what they already know. To help students do this, teachers can use the following techniques:

- Simplify vocabulary. Choose simple, straightforward words that are in everyday use. For example, most students will understand “Learn *the new words*” more easily than “Review *the new vocabulary*”.
- Use consistent language. Reuse words and phrases consistently in different contexts. Eg. Say, “Sit down” rather than saying, “Sit down, Return to your seats, Criss-cross apple sauce...”
- Simplify sentence structure. Avoid complex sentences and passive verbs if possible. For example, instead of “The *homework must be completed and handed in by Friday*”, it would be better to say “You *must finish the work and give it to me on Friday*”.



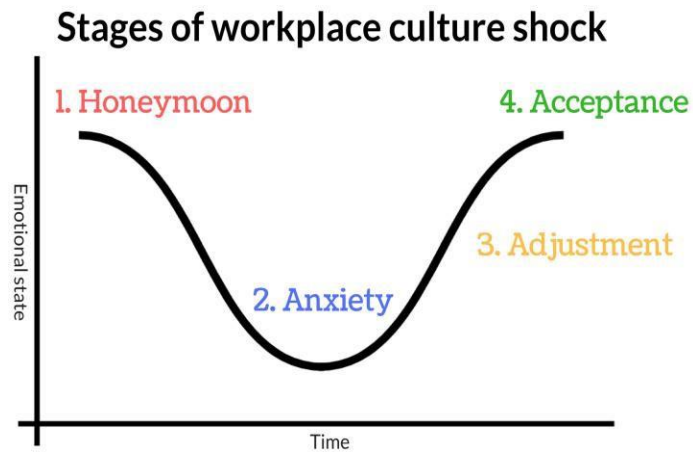
- Highlight key ideas and instructions. Pause to get students’ attention before making an important point and make sure all students can see you. Use gestures for emphasis; raise pitch and volume slightly; repeat, rephrase, or ask a student to do so. Review instructions and concepts periodically with the class to reinforce students’ comprehension.
- Provide notes that highlight key ideas and new words. Use the chalkboard or post a chart in the classroom for ongoing reference. Provide a summary sheet so that students can refer to it when studying at home.
- Give clear instructions. Number and label the steps in an activity. Reinforce oral instructions for homework and projects with a written outline to help students who may not be able to process oral instruction quickly enough to understand fully.

- Use many non-verbal cues. Gestures, facial expressions, and mime will help learners grasp the meaning of what you are saying. Be aware, however, that some gestures (e.g., pointing at people) may have negative meanings in some cultures.
- Make frequent use of a variety of concrete and visual supports. These might include models, toys, math manipulatives, pictures, charts, flashcards, vocabulary lists, key visuals, posters, and banners. Demonstrate procedures and provide related hands-on activities.
- Allow sufficient response time when interacting orally with ESL/ELD learners. Students need time to think in the first language and compose a response in the second.
- Check often for comprehension. For example, at frequent intervals say, “Tell *me* what you have to do next”.
- Provide bilingual support. For students who are in the early stages of learning English, bilingual peers can clarify instruction, provide translations of key words that are difficult to explain in English, and help you to determine whether a student understands.
- Speak naturally and only slightly more slowly than for native speakers of English. ESL/ELD learners have to learn to recognize English as it is actually spoken. It may be necessary to explain contractions such as “don’t” and non-standard spoken forms such as “gonna”.



- Use key visuals.
Key visuals are teacher-developed graphic organizers that show how ideas are related. T-charts, Venn diagrams, flow charts, story maps, time lines, and decision trees are examples of organizers that are not dependent on language knowledge and that promote the development of thinking skills such as classifying, relating cause and effect, comparing and contrasting, or following a sequence.
- Be aware of figurative language. For example, saying “Run that by me again” or “Now we’re cookin’!” may confuse second-language learners. Avoid using slang and unusual idioms with beginning ESL/ELD learners. With students who have progressed beyond the beginning stage, develop techniques for explaining the use of non-literal expressions: for example, post a list of the week’s idioms on a bulletin board.

What to Expect: Stages in the Acculturation Process



During the first stage, ***initial enthusiasm***, newcomers may:

- feel excitement, idealism, and eagerness
- feel overwhelmed by the excitement and anxiety that they may feel extremely fatigued in class
- have some anxiety about the future
- feel optimistic about the new country and new opportunities
- be surprised at how different the school is compared to their past school (eg. school uniforms, class lectures, length of school days, high stakes testing)
- want to contribute but may not do so appropriately

During the second stage, ***culture shock***, newcomers may:

- enter into a silent period*
- have an increase in absences because of stress, cultural expectations around school, or helping family with various tasks or errands
- experience confusion, misunderstandings, and anxiety
- demonstrate withdrawal, alienation, and in some cases, aggressive behaviour



- refuse to work with peers or follow directions
- start speaking negatively about their native culture or Canadian culture
- feel depressed, isolated, and like an outsider
- feel confused about the tension between school and home contrasting views about education, discipline (expectations), and values
- avoid contact with the mainstream culture or community.

During the fourth stage, **integration**, newcomers may:

- feel that their emotional equilibrium is restored
- show humour and trust
- be able to value both old and new cultures.



The rate at which individuals experience the acculturation process may vary even among members of the same family. Some students may experience elements of different stages at the same time; some may remain in one stage for an extended period of time or may repeat characteristics associated with an earlier stage if the process has been interrupted. Students generally find it easier to learn English if they receive support while going through the acculturation process.

*The **silent period**, or preproduction, is a stage in second language acquisition where learners do not attempt to speak. **Silent periods** are more common in children than in adult learners, as there is often more pressure on adult learners to speak during the early stages of acquisition.

Welcoming Tips

Provide a Buddy

On the first day, choose a student to pair up with your new EAL student. It is often more advantageous if the partnering student is also able to speak the new student's language. The partnering student would help the EAL student get to classes, and show them where important places are and what is inside those places, (washroom, gym, library) and generally be there for the student so the first days are not a lonely experience.



Seating

Seat the EAL student where he or she can see and hear all classroom activities. **Introduce yourself and the students who sit near the EAL student.** This should be done several times within the first few days to establish familiarity.



Learn Their Names

Make sure everyone within the class can **pronounce the new EAL student's name correctly**. Ask the student or the parents to say it directly to you and write down the phonemic sound, so you can pronounce it correctly. Model using the student's name for the entire class so they can also learn the proper pronunciation. Avoid Anglicizing the student's name. For example, if the student's name is 'Willim,' do not refer to him as 'William.'

One-On-One When Possible

Your EAL student may not ask for help readily. Be proactive in anticipating his or her language needs. Check in on him or her to see if he or she understood the concept of the lesson you taught. Being able to recall the labels will come with more exposure to the words, but the concepts often contain the main idea. Pull him or her aside or sit down with him or her at his or her desk.

Culture in the Classroom

Use side-by-side English/1st language labels around the classroom.

If you have advanced knowledge of a student's arrival, bring culturally sensitive reading material into your classroom library. The division office has a multicultural and diversity bin (2013).



Classroom Climate

Include the EAL student in group work. Provide opportunities for the student to find success. Try to avoid high pressure situations and don't expect him or her to speak within that group or in front of the class. He or she may be frightened of the new environment or nervous about making mistakes in front of his or her new peers. The students may be more interested in participating using Total Physical Response activities, mimicking activities or small group activities.



Rules and Routines of the Classroom

Make a poster of your most important rules and routines and use pictures to convey the meaning. Students find comfort in a routine. If a student is demonstrating negative behaviours it may be because they don't understand the rules or routines.

Monitoring your Speech

When you speak to your EAL student, speak naturally. Often people speak faster when they are excited. Be aware of your speed and slow down if necessary when speaking to your EAL student. Be careful not to speak louder.

Use Maps

Place a map of the world within your classroom and mark where your EAL and Canadian students have come from.

Valuing Family

Connect with the EAL student's families. Ask your student about their siblings, parents and extended families. Allow the students to connect with siblings in the same school throughout the day. Provide the family with the "Welcome Parent Package," found in the Reception and Orientation Binder or on the PSSD website in the EAL Portal.

Appendix 1

Checklist – Welcoming Tips

First Day Checklist

- ☐ Provide a Buddy
- ☐ Seating
- ☐ Learn Their Names
- ☐ One-On-One When Possible
- ☐ Culture in the Classroom
- ☐ Classroom Climate
- ☐ Rules and Routines of the Classroom
- ☐ Monitoring Speech
- ☐ Use Maps
- ☐ Valuing Families

Instructional Strategies for EAL Students Checklist

Checking for content comprehension:

- Use sentence strips
- Set up dialogue journals between teacher and student
- Plan activities using role play or drama
- Use student reading logs
- Use cloze exercises
- Have students write summaries
- Have students write headlines
- Have students write character diaries
- Have students present information with illustrations, comic strips or other visual representation
- Get students to provide answers and explain processes instead of you telling them

Helping EAL students adjust to the classroom:

- State/display language, content and metacognitive objectives
- List instructions/ process steps and review orally
- Present information in varied ways (oral, written, demonstration, tangible objects)
- Frequently summarize key points
- Repeat and paraphrase important terms
- Provide a word wall with vocabulary relating to the unit of study
- Have students maintain a notebook
- Have students keep a learning log of metacognitive strategies
- Allow sufficient response time

Adjust teaching style:

- Develop a student-centered approach
- Speak a little slower (not louder), using shorter sentences and avoiding idioms
- Include inferential and higher order thinking questions
- Correct language errors through modeling (restating using correct grammar)

Teaching a Multi-level Class:

- Use cooperative learning
- Incorporate peer tutoring
- Use the Writing Process
- Explicitly connect learning student's knowledge and experience
- Preview and explain new concepts and vocabulary before starting instruction
- Use questionnaires and interviews

Motivating Students and Providing Background Knowledge:

- Use semantic webbing and graphic organizers
- Use sentence stems and starters
- Use Anticipation Reaction Guides (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwAy-MwtoEw>)
- Brainstorm in small groups then record answers on the board before starting the lesson
- Use KWL charts
- Use realia, maps, photos and manipulatives
- Do activities that allow for interaction and movement

Adapting EAL Techniques to the Content Classrooms:

- Hands on activities and demonstrations
- Use audiobooks or videos with books
- Use a variety of groupings
- Provide students with an outline of the lesson and questions that will be asked beforehand so that they have an opportunity to process information and participate more readily
- Make use of your smartboard, whiteboard, document camera or other devices to demonstrate techniques such as highlighting, identifying main idea, translating, etc.