ELL Planning & Services

Assessment and Identification

For a student to be identified as an ELL student, assessment of their English (or French in the CSF) language proficiency in all areas of language development (oral language, reading, writing) must be carried out initially. Furthermore, assessment of relevant areas of language development should be carried out on an ongoing basis, and at least annually, to determine language acquisition progress and eligibility for ELL Supplemental Funding in subsequent years (see “Ongoing Review” section of this document).

Initial assessments are often conducted upon a student’s first arrival at school, but may be conducted at any point if there is an indication that the student might need ELL services in order to successfully access the provincially prescribed curriculum. In addition to language proficiency, it is often helpful at this point to gather additional information in order to better understand the student’s needs and assist in support planning.

This information can include:

- Academic history and experiences (e.g., report cards if available; information on interruptions to schooling)
- The language(s) spoken in the student’s home or the student’s heritage language(s)
- Proficiency in all areas of language development (oral language, reading, writing) in their first language, if different than English (or French in the CSF) – where documentary evidence and information from the family is insufficient, assessment of the student’s first-language proficiency may be required, if available
- Basic skills in academic content areas (e.g., mathematics)
- Possible needs other than ELL services (e.g., support services for special needs, Aboriginal support service programs, trauma counselling, services of a settlement worker, etc.)
Assessment should be designed to take into account the student’s age and developmental maturity, and their academic, cultural, and social/emotional needs. Assessments should also consider cultural and linguistic diversity (for example, should avoid requiring specific cultural knowledge), be non-discriminatory, and take into account the fact that students may have differing levels of proficiency in relation to different areas of language (e.g., they may have more advanced oral language proficiency than written language proficiency).

Initial and ongoing assessment of language and literacy proficiencies can include, but is not limited to, a combination of the following approaches:

- Oral interviews with the student (and with parents, as appropriate)
- Review of the student’s unedited written language samples
- Evaluation of the student’s reading and listening comprehension
- Review of observation reports or summaries related to language development and progress
- A standardized test of language proficiency*

In assessing language proficiency, schools are encouraged to describe the student’s performance in relation to a continuum of descriptors such as the Ministry’s ELL Standards. This is also beneficial for reporting (see “Reporting Student Progress” section of this document).

* Use of standardized tests can yield helpful information for assessment, but these should never be the sole means of assessment for any area of language development (oral language, reading, and writing).