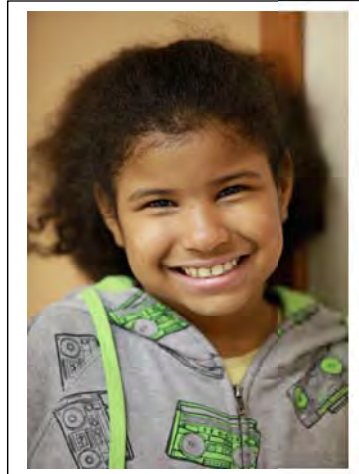




CELLS (4-8 years):

Young Complex English Language Learners (ELLs) and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners in the Classroom



When I See a Child

When I see a child, I see possibility
and I remember that differences
are the qualities which make us unique.
Mistakes should be accepted
and acknowledged as opportunities to learn and
grow.

When I see a child who is frustrated,
it reminds me to quiet myself,
listen, and remember that learning
can be hard work.

Defiance teaches me patience and understanding.
Stubbornness gives me insight into a child's fears,
and tells us how scary it is to try new things.

When I see a child who is angry,
I am sensitive to their fragility
and the complexities of their lives.
Loneliness and isolation give me opportunities
to reach out and be a friend.

When I see a child, I see resiliency
And that gives me hope.
I may never know the impact of my influence,
So I am encouraged to open my heart
and give freely of myself.

Colleen Nabata,
Calgary, AB

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Introduction

The learners, families and staff of the Calgary Board of Education are enriched by the cultural and linguistic diversity within our schools.

Our young culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners and their families may encounter challenges while settling into our system of education. We recognize the importance of respectful, thoughtful and intentional programming in order to effectively program for these children.

Who are CLD learners and ELLs?

These learners include children whose home language is not English, learners whose home culture differs from mainstream culture. These learners come from a wide range of backgrounds, including First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples, newcomers to Canada, immigrants (not necessarily within this or the last generation) who have maintained their non-English home language or kept their home culture.

For the purposes of ease of consistency with the CBE CELLS Toolkits (Complex English Language Learners Toolkits), ELL will be used broadly in this document to refer to culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

This does not, however, reduce the importance of

- culturally responsive education to young learners with unaccented English who arrive at school unfamiliar with schools and with Canadian culture,
- English language development for those young learners with unaccented English who may have a limited fund of English vocabulary.

ELL ... broadly refers to culturally and linguistically diverse learners in this document.

The purpose of this document

This collaborative project is designed to:

- build upon teachers' strength in making observations and adjusting programming to meet the needs of their young learners
- respond to common questions from teachers regarding young ELLs
- assist in understanding how language, culture, development and other factors can impact the behaviour of early learners (ages 4 - 8)
- assist in determining the roots of observed behaviour
- offer concrete strategies to address identified challenges and differentiate instruction
- highlight the universal strategies that should be in place for all learners (RTI – tier 1) and targeted instruction (RTI – tier 2) designed to meet the identified needs of the ELL learner
- build upon existing initiatives at CBE for supporting ELLs in the classroom
- provide links to additional resources and sources of support



Suggestions for use

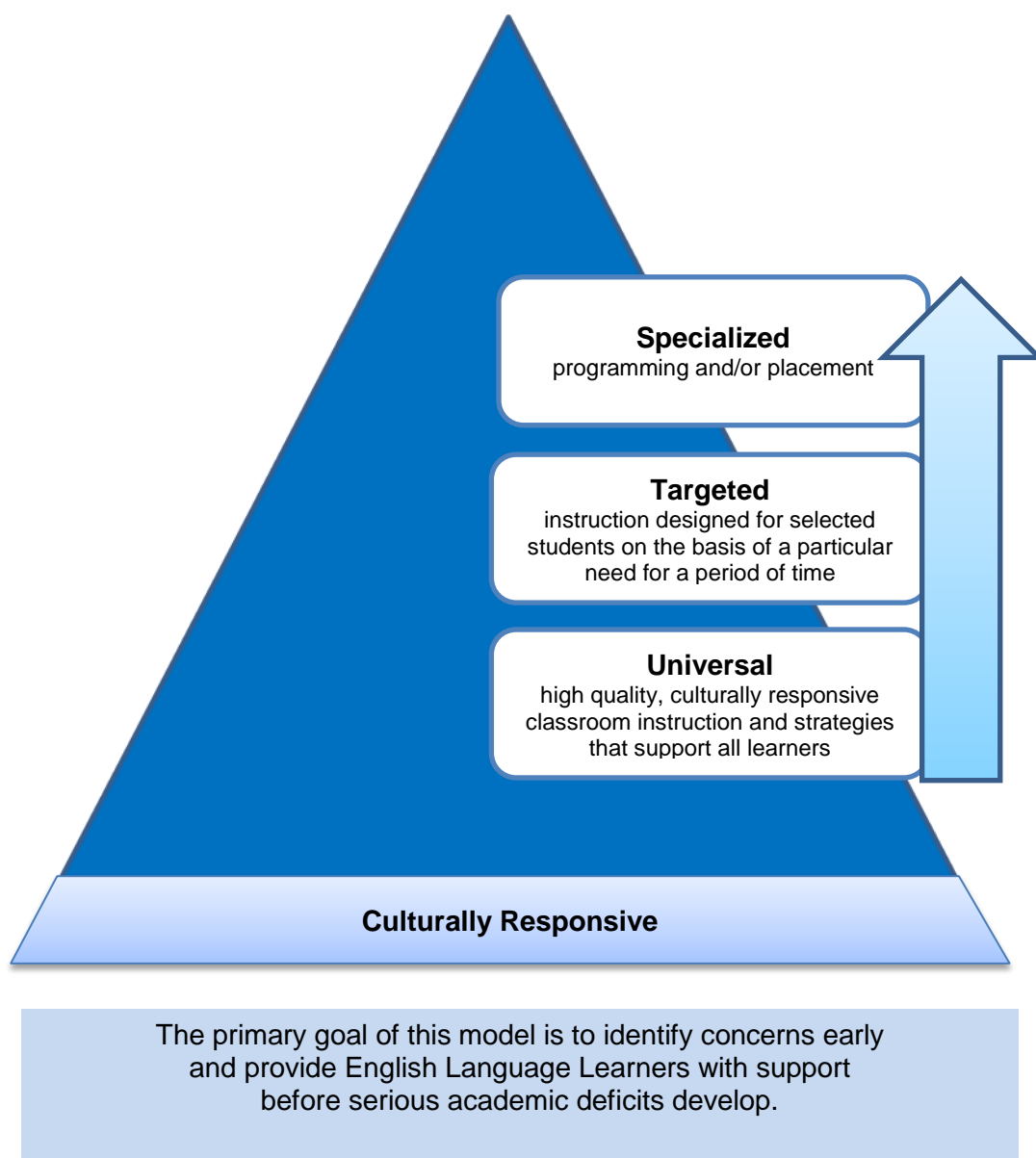
There are many possible reasons why ELLs experience challenges in school settings. This document is intended to describe some of the reasons for the observed challenges and behaviours, and some of the strategies that can be implemented to support these learners.

Teachers can identify the most pressing issues and prioritize interventions.

The **Observations and Sample Interventions** are not intended as an exhaustive list but as a starting point for developing a better understanding of how language, culture and development can impact classroom behaviour.

Links to support documents are provided to help gather information, identify valuable strategies, and communicate with parents and members of the learner's support team.

A Continuum of Supports for Specialized Services



Fuchs, D. & Deschler, D.D. (2007). What we need to know about responsiveness to intervention (and shouldn't be afraid to ask). *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice* 22(2) 129-136.

How Young ELLs Learn English at School

Supporting Oral Development (Speaking and Listening)

Stable, safe, predictable and emotionally warm settings are foundational for young ELLs learning any skill. This environment and relational connection provide the context in which language is learned.

ELLs typically learn English through the pathway of oral language first, followed by growing skills in reading and writing. Having many opportunities to listen and speak are key for young ELLs. (Some ELLs with neurological differences may not follow this specific pathway. Additionally, in some cultures ELLs are encouraged to learn English through reading and writing first.)

Supporting ELLs in the classroom typically includes:

- Focussing on **engagement** and developing awareness of sounds of language
- Posting **routines** as a **visual schedule**, referring to those routines frequently, especially during transition times, amending the visual schedule when there are changes in the day.
- Using **gestures** and **actions** (Total Physical Response)
- Providing ample and even generous opportunities to **practice oral language** throughout the day (one-to-one, pairs, small groups, large groups)
- **Pairing** ELLs with first language English speakers

Effective Instruction for ELLs

A teacher who plans and designs effective instruction for ELLs considers the following components: cultural responsiveness, explicit language instruction and personalized learning. (See the Glossary for more information).

For further information on **cultural responsiveness**, see Diversity and Learning Support Advisors, resources within Alberta Teacher's Association, and various cultural responsiveness survey tools, etc.

For further information on programming and instruction for ELLs visit the [ELL page on Staff insite](#).

To see a summary of typical behaviours exhibited by ELLs as they acquire English we refer to the [Characteristics of English Language Learners on the Alberta Education's website](#).

Key terms in this document are:

ELL (English Language Learners)

L1 (home language)

L2 (English)

See the **Glossary** for more terms such as ...
LP1 – LP5
ELD
ELA
CLD
... and more!

Observations and Sample Interventions

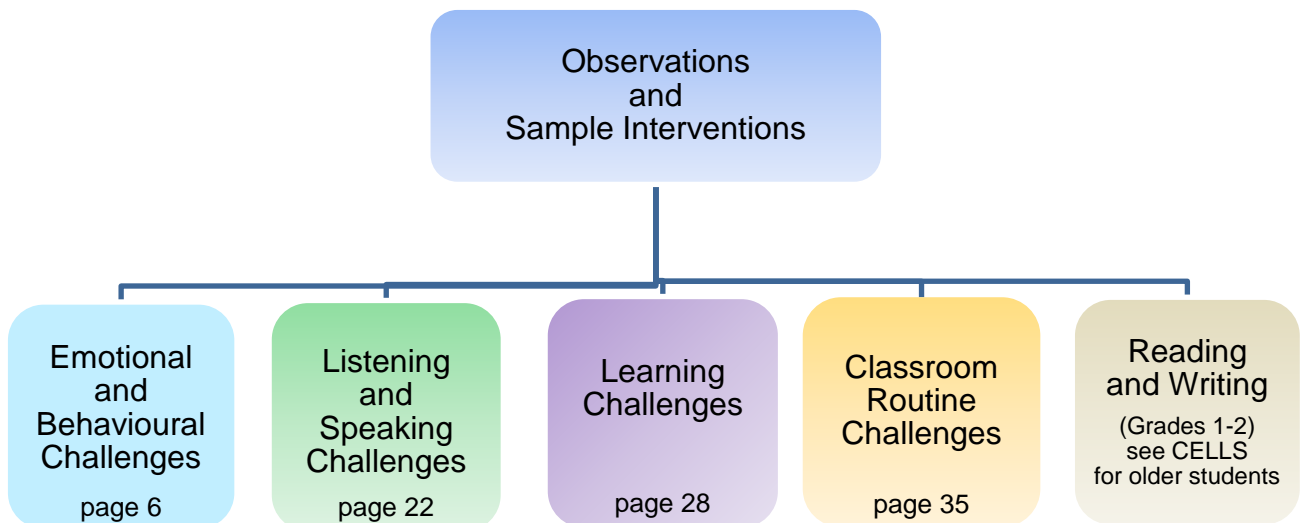
This section provides:

- a list of commonly observed challenges in the classroom
- note that Reading and Writing challenges (ages 6-8) are addressed in the CELLS Toolkit for older students.
- various interpretations of the challenges including linguistic, cultural, developmental perspectives
- sample intervention strategies

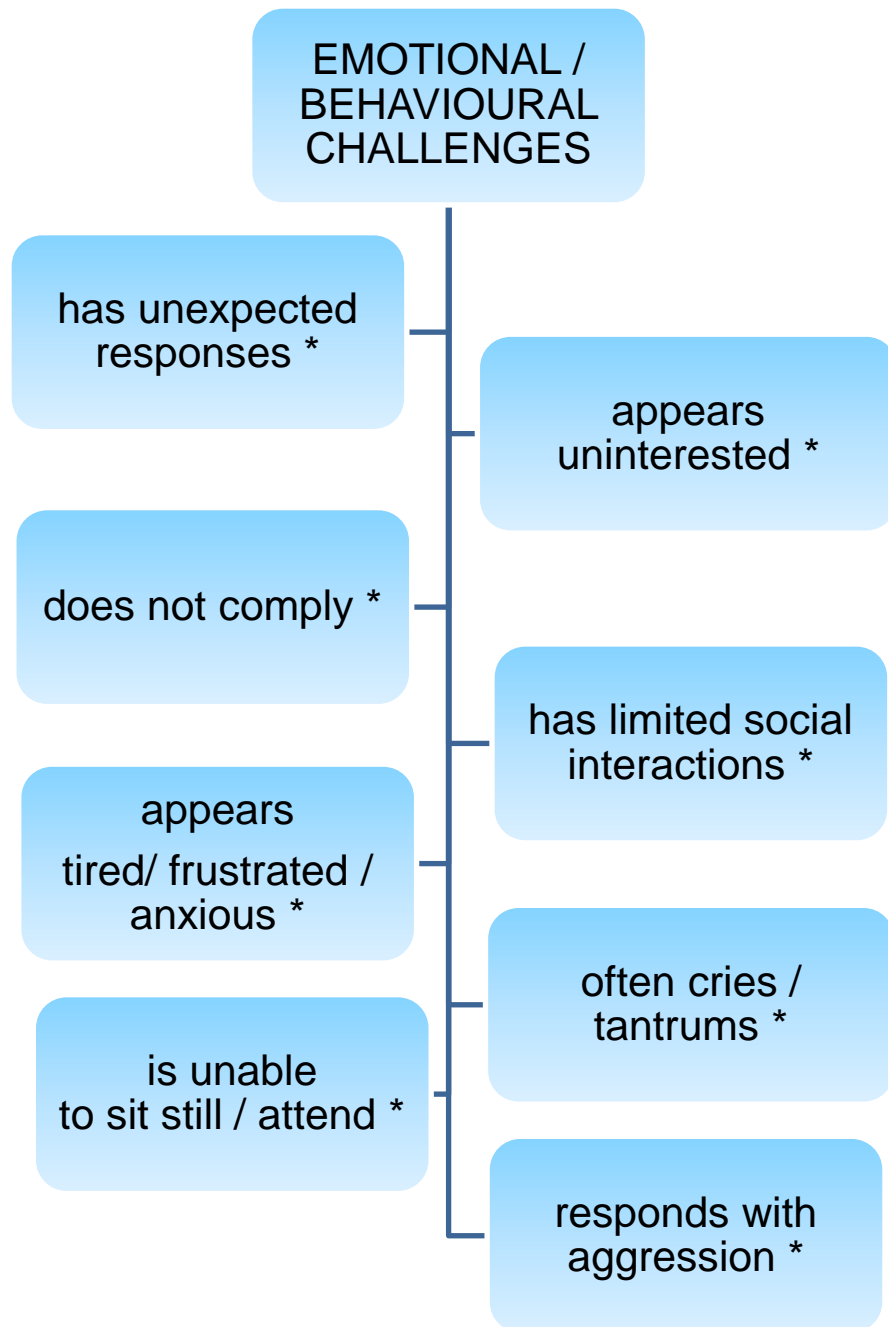
Understanding Learners and Gathering Information, found later in this document, will provide you with the background that will help you to better understand the basic needs of your young ELL.

To use this section:

1. Target the challenge that appears most significant.
(Hint: pick the challenge in which you will likely see the most positive impact).
2. Locate that page reflecting that challenge.
(Hint: click on the words in the chart to “jump” to the section you want).
3. Read the “First ask yourself” questions.
These will offers broader considerations beyond culture, language and development.
4. Read the “Linguistic, Cultural and Other Considerations” to decide what to alter in your classroom.
5. Reflect upon, select, and try some of the sample intervention strategies.
6. Consider recording when you used an intervention, and its impact.
(Hint: This might be helpful for future discussions and assessments.)



Emotional/Behavioural Changes



* Some behavioural challenges related to reading and writing expectations for Grades 1 and 2 are supported through the CELLS Toolkit (focussing on older learners).

Has unexpected responses (e.g., “unusual” or “unexpected”)

First ask yourself

- What could this learner's behaviour be telling me?
- Is the function of the behaviour to “get” something or “avoid” something?*
- How often does this behaviour occur?
- When does it not occur?
- Does the learner understand the expectations / requests?
- Is the learner's idea of appropriate classroom, lunchroom or recess behaviour similar to school expectations?
- Has the learner experienced immigration? At what stage of cultural adaptation is the learner?
- Does the learner have a refugee background? Has the learner experienced traumatic events?
- Is the learner's home environmental condition conducive to comfortable adjustment to school?
- Does the learner feel the need to respond even if she or he does not understand the question?
- Are there medical conditions that impact behaviour?

Has unexpected responses (e.g., “unusual” or “unexpected”)

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learner may be experiencing and acting out various emotional stages of culture shock; excitement, confusion, disappointment, despair; See Everything ESL Culture Shock. ▪ Learner may have behaviours that appear perfectly normal in their first culture, but appear unusual in the new culture. This includes verbal and non-verbal communication. ▪ Assertive behaviour may be more highly valued in the home culture. ▪ Even though a learner is born in Canada, the learner's level of acculturation will likely reflect the acculturation level of the parent. ▪ The learner may have had limited exposure to other children. ▪ Family may be experiencing changes in circumstances (new home, employment challenges, or loss of friends/extended family, etc.). ▪ Family members may have been recently reunited; roles and responsibilities altered. ▪ Learner may have limited experience relating to people outside the family, and may assume the listener will understand the way his/her parents can. ▪ Learner may not understand the context or questions being asked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Work with the class to establish and model expected behaviour (i.e. rules) <input type="checkbox"/> Provide social skills language and training to assist learner in making connections with peers e.g. modeling, role-play, and use of social scripts. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide visuals and concrete objects to help learner make a personal connections with the concepts presented. <input type="checkbox"/> If possible, compare this behaviour with other same-aged peers from within the learner's culture. <input type="checkbox"/> If possible, connect learner to a “Bilingual Buddy” who might be a role model and support <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure small group work, using flexible groups which include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. native English speakers who have proficient language development; b. non-accented English speakers with limited language proficiency; c. new language learners. <input type="checkbox"/> Use positive reinforcement to support expected behaviours. <input type="checkbox"/> Gain understanding of the learner from holistic standpoint as a way to gain understandings of the behaviours (e.g., development of body awareness, speech, emotional regulations, first culture, family, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Focus language instruction on the socio-linguistic and strategic competencies from the “Alberta ESL Proficiency Benchmarks” pdf: http://www.education.alberta.ca/media/1111060/esl_benchmark1.pdf <input type="checkbox"/> Consult ESL K-9 Guide to Implementation pdf: http://www.education.alberta.ca/media/507659/eslto9gi.pdf <input type="checkbox"/> Consult the document “working with Young Children Who Are Learning English as a New Language” http://www.education.alberta.ca/media/1093791/earlylearning.pdf <input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student's need for escape, attention, something tangible and/or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some direct translations are confusing for learners (e.g. Korean: ney = yes) ▪ Unusual or unexpected responses might reflect “getting” or “avoiding” something. This may serve a deeper need connected to escape, attention, something tangible and/or something sensory. 	



Appears uninterested or bored

 L1 = home language
L2 = English

First ask yourself

- Does the learner feel part of the class?
- Is the function of the behaviour to “get” something or “avoid” something?
- Is the learner reluctant to attach because of significant losses (e.g. fleeing unsafe settings, foster placements)?
- What topic(s) capture the learner’s interest?
- Is this in response to reading or writing demands for a 6-8 year old ELL?
- Is the material at an appropriate level?
- Is the content culturally relevant?
- Are sensory needs taking priority?
- Has the material been presented visually?

Appears uninterested or bored

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations

- The learner may not see his/her own experience/culture represented in the materials and has not been able to make any personal connection.
- Information may be in conflict with cultural values, religion and family experiences.
- The learner may be experiencing and acting out various emotional stages of culture shock. See [Everything ESL Culture Shock](#)
- Our expectations of attentive listening (e.g., being still, eyes on the speaker) may not be expected of young learners in other cultures.
- Classroom resources may be unfamiliar so that it takes time to become comfortable touching and playing with them.
- Parents may have different rules for playing with materials than we do in the classroom.
- The learner may lack the language skills to understand the task and/ or express interest/ understanding.
- Children may not have been exposed to books as would be the case in an oral culture (no written language).
- There may be family concerns regarding safety with some classroom materials (e.g., scissors, sharp pencils, etc.).

Sample classroom strategies

- ☐ Consult with the parents/caregivers. Discuss strategies that are successful in the home.
- ☐ Build a strong relationship with the learner to increase the sense of safety in the school and classroom. Use the strength of attachment to assist the learner to follow your lead.
- ☐ Provide visuals that will guide the learner through tasks.
- ☐ If possible provide opportunities for learner to hear the information in L1 (home language).
- ☐ Take time to specifically teach some of the vocabulary needed to comprehend and engage in this topic.
- ☐ Assist the learner to make personal connections to the topics and stories being discussed.
- ☐ When speaking with ELLs adjust speech (e.g. slow down, repeat, add visual supports).
- ☐ Provide daily opportunities for small group and peer interaction with “scripted conversations” for language support (e.g. “How are you today?” “What is your favorite ...?”).
- ☐ Provide opportunities for small group and cooperative learning activities (e.g., build a structure out of blocks).
- ☐ Introduce L1 phrases to other learners in the class to establish peer connections (e.g. “How many different ways can we say hello?”).
- ☐ Search out culturally-relevant books and websites. Include stories from this learner’s culture within the story time opportunities.
- ☐ Encourage the learner’s family to visit the public library to get books on the same or similar topic and access dual language books and websites. <http://www.fareasternbooks.com/>
- ☐ Provide a buddy who can help the learner become familiar with materials.
- ☐ Take the time to do a little cultural research to better understand the learner’s experiences.
- ☐ Learn and investigate cultural events
- ☐ Have the learner teach/ share about the home culture (e.g., family treasure, picture, food, family visitors, etc.).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This behaviour might reflect “getting” or “avoiding” something. This may serve a deeper need connected to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student’s need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed. □ If related to reading and writing tasks, increase oral language exposure and see CELLS Toolkit for older ELLs for reading and writing supports.



Does not comply

First ask yourself

- What could this learner be telling me through his behaviour?
- Is the function of the behaviour to “get” something or “avoid” something?*
- Are the expectations reasonable for this learner?
- Do you ensure that you have the learner’s attention before giving directions?
- Do you take the time to confirm that your message has been heard and understood?
- What interests and motivates this learner?
- Do parents expect compliance at home?
- How is the family communicating expectations about school behaviour to the learner?

Does not comply

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations

- The learner may be experiencing and acting out various emotional stages of culture shock. See [Everything ESL Culture Shock](#)
- Some families and cultures value indirect teaching with their children’s learning from experience, undirected by adults.
- Families and cultures vary in how important or unimportant) following instructions are for young children. The learner may have no experience in following instructions.
- Some families and cultures use authoritarian methods and coercive methods to gain compliance. A change in discipline approaches may be a challenging adjustment for the learner.
- In some cultures and families, a female adult has less persuasive influence than a male.
- The expectations in the classroom may clash with the home culture’s expectations (e.g., girls do not play soccer; boys do not cook; children do not dialogue with an adult).
- Some cultures expect self-regulation at a later age (e.g., at seven, at adolescence, at adulthood, etc.).
- Some learners with non-accented English have very limited English, and very limited vocabularies. They may look like they understand, but may have a small working vocabulary

Sample classroom strategies

- ☐ Consult with the parents/caregivers. Discuss strategies that are successful in the home. Take time to understand what is expected at home, learner’s background experiences, etc.).
- ☐ Ensure that the classroom routines are consistent and posted. Use visuals.
- ☐ Build a strong relationship with the learner to increase the sense of safety in the school and classroom. Use the strength of attachment to assist the learner to follow your lead.
- ☐ Collect before you direct (get learner’s attention, smile, get the learner to nod with you about something she or he is doing, then direct to the new activity).
- ☐ Ensure understanding by asking the learner to repeat your instructions in his/her own words/gestures.
- ☐ Pair the learner with another learner who knows the routines to increase opportunities for peer modeling.
- ☐ If possible, observe the learner with older learners from the same culture. Notice if the learner is following within-culture cuing
- ☐ Use age-appropriate manipulatives, visuals, pictures to ensure that the learner understands key concepts standing (e.g., flip chart with drawn examples).
- ☐ Shorten the length of the verbal instructions and adjust the rate of speech (e.g. Stop! Listen!).
- ☐ Provide preferential seating (e.g., closer to you, closer to a classmate that is helpful).
- ☐ Allow “language and activity breaks” (e.g., five minute non-directed sensory break).
- ☐ Review key ideas to reinforce what was heard.
- ☐ Use Boardmaker symbols or Smart Notebook activities.
- ☐ Encourage learner to draw what he/ she hears so the teacher can check for comprehension.
- ☐ Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student’s need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed.

- The learner may understand the social cues, but not the instructions
- The learner may communicate “yes” by a social response (e.g., smile, nod) but may not comprehend what is being said.
- Though not coded as an “English Language Learner”, the learner may have a very limited English vocabulary.
- Exploring the new language is exciting and the learner is concentrating on using the new language instead of doing what is asked.
- Figurative language, idiomatic expressions and humor are culturally determined; they can be difficult to understand in a second language.
- *Non-compliance might reflect “getting” or “avoiding” something. This may serve a deeper need connected to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory.



Has limited interactions with classmates



L1 = home language
L2 = English

First ask yourself

- What could this learner's behaviour be telling me?
- Is the function of the behaviour to "get" something or "avoid" something?*
- Has there been a history of trauma or complex trauma? Family dynamics? Change in caregivers? Multiple geographical moves?
- Is this a learner who has no practice in how to play with peers and lacks social skills?
- Is this a personality style (e.g., inhibited, cautious)?
- Is the learner culturally isolated?
- Has there been an emphasis on solitary activities (e.g. video games, T.V.)?
- Is this related to lack of comfort with peers?
- What is the current developmental level of play (i.e., solitary, parallel, reciprocal, etc.)?
- Has this learner been away from parents before?
- Is this learner accustomed to interacting in multi-aged groups?

Has limited interactions with classmates

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations

- Play is culturally and linguistically based. A learner new to the school culture and to L2 may not know what to do or how to engage.
- Some learners need to sit back and observe before they feel comfortable interacting with others.
- Learners may have limited exposure to games/toys and need time to observe and understand rules and expectations.
- A learner who moves from a reserve to an urban school may struggle with how to play with others in an urban setting.
- When parents own childhood play patterns have been interrupted (e.g., residential schools) the parent may not know how to coach the next generation in patterns of interaction and play.
- Pre-existing cultural tensions can result in mistrust may impact learner's interactions.
- Lack of interaction might reflect "getting" or "avoiding" something. This may serve a deeper need connected to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory.

Sample classroom strategies

- ☐ Consult with the parents/caregivers. Discuss strategies that are successful in the home.
- ☐ Emphasize an emotional and physically safe environment before emphasis on academic success.
- ☐ Build a strong relationship with the learner to increase the sense of safety in the school and classroom.
- ☐ Reduce possible anxiety by avoiding activities that are unplanned
- ☐ Ensure that the classroom routines are consistent and posted with visual supports.
- ☐ Find 1 to 1 time to play at learner's level and coach social interactions.
- ☐ Consider the level of the learner's play - solitary, parallel, reciprocal. Encourage play at the level at which the learner feels most comfortable.
- ☐ Provide a variety of culturally relevant play materials and books.
- ☐ Avoid pressuring the learner to engage.
- ☐ Consider giving the learner a special role outside of the activity as a way to engage in the activity (e.g., a camera to take photos of the learners at centers).
- ☐ Assist the learners to practice classmates' names in fun ways (e.g., bean bag catch in a sitting circle and call out learner's name who is to catch the bean bag).
- ☐ Encourage the ELL to share a particular interest with a classmate (e.g. puzzle).
- ☐ Introduce L1 (home language) phrases in the class to establish peer connections and coach the learner to join play situations using these phrases. Guide them in the first few minutes of the activity (e.g., "Let's play! Would you like to go first?").
- ☐ Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student's need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed.

Seems tired, frustrated, withdrawn, anxious


L1 = home language
L2 = English

First ask yourself

- What could this learner be telling me by his/her behaviour?
- Is the function of the behaviour to “get” something or “avoid” something?
- What’s happening at home (e.g. family issues of: settlement, nutrition, hunger, anxiety, poverty, stages of acculturation, older siblings being responsible for significant care of younger siblings)?
- Are expectations reasonable for this learner?
- Have I provided a visual schedule to ensure that the day is predictable?
- Does the learner seem “hyper vigilant” or “overly lethargic”? These may be seen in learners who have witnessed or experienced violence, or ongoing traumas.
- Does the learner know that making mistakes is part of being a good learner?
- Does the first culture or family demand perfection?
- Is anxiety contributing to attendance issues?
- Is the fatigue related to parenting style (e.g., few routines or structure within the home)?
- Is the learner homesick?
- Are there medial and/ or nutrition issues?

Seems tired, frustrated, withdrawn, anxious

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations

- Some cultures value passive learning and the importance of reflection, which may look like “withdrawal”.
- The learner may be experiencing and acting out various emotional stages of culture shock. [Everything ESL Culture Shock](#)
- The learner may be over-stimulated, tired or frustrated from trying to understand a new language for long periods of time.
- The learner may be frustrated by an inability to communicate and achieve success in L2 (English).
- Detachment may serve as a coping mechanism or mask for stress.
- The learner’s language proficiency may not match the level of academic content and instruction; adjust accordingly.
- Visual or concrete supports are needed in the classroom, especially for ELLs.
- *Intense emotional responses might reflect “getting” or “avoiding” something. This may serve a deeper need connected to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. .

Sample classroom strategies

- ☐ Consult with the parents/caregivers. Discuss strategies that are successful in the home. Involve additional community or cultural supports where appropriate.
- ☐ Ensure that daily visual schedule and classroom routines are posted and referenced regularly especially during transition times.
- ☐ Build a strong relationship with the learner to increase the sense of safety in the school and classroom.
- ☐ Build in calming place, a place to rest, be silent, take a break from listening to English (e.g., comfy chair for quiet enjoyment of books, a listening center with soothing music).
- ☐ Incorporate calming strategies into the daily routine of the classroom (e.g., quiet time listening to music, 10 deep breaths, giving oneself a hug). For more ideas see models from Conscious Discipline, from Zones of Regulation, consult with an OT.
- ☐ Provide opportunities for the learner to speak or listen to home language (e.g., buddy time with a learner with same home language).
- ☐ Provide expressive opportunities (e.g., art, gym, music) as a way of increasing emotional regulation abilities, and diminishing fatigue.
- ☐ When speaking with the learner be aware of the need to adjust speech; rephrase, repeat, add visual support etc.
- ☐ Use fewer words when a learner is frustrated.
- ☐ Offer activities that are in the areas of interest and strength, and that are non-language based to allow the learner to contribute in a meaningful way.
- ☐ Provide daily opportunities for small group and peer interaction with “scripted conversations” for language support.
- ☐ Provide social skills training for initiation of play, entrance into social groups.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invite people into the classroom to read in the learner's home language (e.g., parent or grandparent story-telling or reading time). <input type="checkbox"/> Consider involving drumming programs at school to increase the possibility of positive change to baseline heart rate. See Dr. Perry at www.childtrauma.org and Neurodevelopmental Sequential Therapy. <input type="checkbox"/> Assist parents in understanding the need for routines within the home. Provide support to develop those routines (e.g., CBE Early Learning Team's Bedtime Made Easier Package, involve DALSA workers). <input type="checkbox"/> Model mistake-making as part of learning (e.g. "Oops! I made a mistake. Wasn't that funny! Now I try again!"). <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor possible physiological effects of anxiety such as rate of breathing, blushing, dizziness, trembling, clammy skin, digestive issues, fainting. Work with Specialists and/ or Strategists and the learner's family to develop a plan to teach the learner strategies to manage anxiety <input type="checkbox"/> Be consistent; provide clear, meaningful praise and acknowledgement for positive behaviour. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student's need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed

For further information on programming and instruction for ELLs visit the [ELL page](#) on Staff Insite



Often cries, temper tantrums



DLSA =
Diversity & Learning
Support Advisor

First ask yourself

- What is the birth order of this learner?
- Is the function of the behaviour to “get” something or “avoid” something?
- Is the ELL getting adequate sleep?
- Is the learner young compared to other classmates? To other ELLs? To other ELLs from the same background?
- Are your expectations realistic for this learner?
- Might this learner be demonstrating the same behaviour as a younger sibling at home?
- What are the expectations at home? Are they in line with classroom expectations?
- Is this learned behaviour based on expectations/patterned responses from others (e.g. caregivers)?
- Is the family under extreme stress?
- Could the behaviour result from separation anxiety or culture shock? See [Everything ESL Culture Shock](#).
- Are there sensory needs?
- Does the learner seem “hyper vigilant”? This may be seen in learners who have witnessed or experienced violence, who are experiencing one of the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?
- Does the learner have an older sibling who might act as a buffer or translator within the school setting?
- Is the learner frustrated or overwhelmed due to a lack of connection with classmates?
- Has the learner experienced frequent moves or the loss of a loved one?

Often cries, temper tantrums

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations

- The school experience may be new for the learner, causing anxiety, lack of understanding.
- Disappointment and frustration are common challenges that impact the behaviour of early learners in structured group settings.
- The learner may have delays in both their first and second language and therefore may not be experiencing strong communication.
- The learner may be over stimulated, tired and frustrated from trying to understand English, which may sound like “noise” to beginner learner.
- Some cultures value community over individuals. Learners may have difficulty with being singled out or praised on an individual basis.
- Intense emotional responses might reflect “getting” or “avoiding” something. This may serve a deeper need connected to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory.

Sample classroom strategies

- ☐ Consult with the parents/caregivers. Discuss strategies that are successful in the home. Build positive connections with parents.
- ☐ Ensure that the classroom routines are posted, consistent, and referred to often. Avoid changes, give notice and change visuals.
- ☐ Use social stories to help support expected behaviour.
- ☐ Build a strong relationship with the learner to increase the sense of safety in the school and classroom.
- ☐ Model being calm and using calming strategies (e.g. I am feeling a little worried. So I am going to breathe in and out five times).
- ☐ Incorporate calming strategies into the daily routine of the classroom (e.g., water break, quiet time listening to music, deep breaths, giving oneself a hug, rubbing other student's shoulder).
- ☐ Build in a place to regain calm, to rest, be silent (e.g., comfy chair for quiet reading, listening center with soothing music).
- ☐ Provide a “Language Break” (e.g., gym, computers, art, etc.)
- ☐ When speaking with the learner be aware of the need to adjust speech; rephrase, repeat, add visual support etc.
- ☐ Provide daily opportunities for small group and peer interaction with “scripted conversations” for language support.
- ☐ Use learner's strengths and areas of interest to help engage
- ☐ Create a culturally inclusive classroom where learners can share elements of their culture with classmates.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunity to get parenting support (e.g., Family Oriented Programs, community parenting programs, DLSA). <input type="checkbox"/> If needed, assist the family to complete a medical evaluation (e.g., fill forms out with the family, involve a DLSA). <input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student's need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Be consistent; provide clear, meaningful praise and acknowledgement for positive behaviour. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student's need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed



Is unable to sit still and attend to instruction

First ask yourself

- What could this learner be telling me by his/her behaviour?
- Is the function of the behaviour to “get” something or “avoid” something?*
- Is the material personally relevant? Are their short, manageable carpet times?
- How are this learner's hearing and vision?
- Is the function of the behaviour to “get” something or “avoid” something?*
- Is the learner overstimulated by the activity level of the classroom and the number of children in the class?
- Is this the learner's first school experience?
- Is the learner easily overwhelmed?
- Is the learner aware of classroom and behavioural expectations? Are they posted and supported by visuals?
- Do parents encourage and value active learning with few restrictions imposed?
- Are there opportunities for movement breaks throughout the day?
- Is the high activity evident throughout the day, or just at specific times (e.g. carpet time)?
- Could this be a sensory issue?
- What is the nature of the home environment? Does it impact the behaviour at school?
- Does the learner have adequate space to run and play with others outside of school time?
- Are parents aware of extra -curricular activities their child could participate in?

Is unable to sit still and attend to instruction

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations

- Some families and cultures provide unlimited exploration as a means to learning. The activity level that is acceptable at home may appear as too “active” in the classroom
- Some cultures and families prioritize self-regulation at a later age (e.g., at seven, at adolescence,)
- The learner may not have been required to comply with structured routine and adult direction
- The learner may have had no experience with expectations to attend to tasks independently
- Some families and cultures do not expose learners to school-related activities such as using scissors, prior to school. A new experience may result in hard-to-contain excitement or frustration.
- Because of limited language skills the learner may be lacking confidence. His/her active behaviour may be his/her way of coping.

Sample classroom strategies

- ☐ Consult with the parents/caregivers. Discuss strategies that are successful in the home.
- ☐ Ensure that the classroom routines are consistent and posted using visual supports. Avoid unscheduled changes/transitions.
- ☐ Schedule mostly small group activities
- ☐ Ensure large group activities are short and engaging
- ☐ Teach individual self-regulation and calming strategies as needed and coach the learner to use these strategies when you see their energy level is rising.
- ☐ Provide activity and sensory regulation breaks throughout the day (e.g. Brain gym, yoga for kids)
- ☐ Model ways of dealing with disappointment and frustration (e.g., Maybe next time you will get a turn)
- ☐ Ensure that programming provides many opportunities for interactive learning and active engagement
- ☐ Teach appropriate small actions like foot tapping as replacements to running and jumping.
- ☐ Schedule “cool down” and “calming” activities after high activity.
- ☐ Provide calming places in the classroom and coach learners when to choose their calming place and what to do to calm
- ☐ Use group collecting and group calming (see Dr. Bailey's Conscious Discipline).
- ☐ Provide and regularly review social scripts – to use at home and school.
- ☐ If providing a fidget toy, ensure that the learner and parent understand its purpose.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ *This behaviour might reflect “getting” or “avoiding” something. This may serve a deeper need connected to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student’s need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed



Responds with aggression (hits others/damages property)

First ask yourself

- What could this learner be telling me by his/her behaviour?
- Is the function of the behaviour to “get” something or “avoid” something?
- Does this learner have the social language necessary to verbalize wants and needs?
- Is the family isolated from other children and, if so, does the learner have limited play and group skills?
- Is this the learner's first large group experience?
- When do classroom challenges most frequently occur?
- What is the context of the behaviour?
- Is the learner safe at home?
- Is there chronic exposure to violence at home (e.g., family violence, violent movies or video games)?
- Is this part of “fight or flight” response to a perceived threat?
- Is the learner overwhelmed with the tasks and classroom expectations?

Responds with aggression (hits others/damages property)

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some cultures prioritize the development of self- regulation at a later age. ▪ Learners may have lost friends in the immigration process. Grief and loss can result in frustration with self and others. ▪ Some parents tell their young learners that it is okay to defend themselves by hitting others. Young learners are concrete and literal and may not be able to moderate degrees of this reactive aggression. ▪ The learner may not know how to communicate frustration or make requests to “stop”. ▪ The learner may not know how to initiate play with others. The aggressive behaviour may actually be attempts at initiating friendships. ▪ The learner may have never been away from a parent and/or left alone for an extended time. He/she may become frightened, anxious and aggressive in response. ▪ The learner may be frustrated and mentally exhausted from the challenges of learning a new language ▪ Some of the materials may be unfamiliar to the learner. Lack of experience and immature fine motor skills may lead to unintended damage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with the parents/caregivers. Discuss strategies that are successful in the home. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the classroom routines are consistent and posted using visual supports. Refer to the visuals regularly, especially during transition times. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid changes/transitions without giving notice/ changing the visual. <input type="checkbox"/> Use social stories to help support expected behaviour. <input type="checkbox"/> Build a strong relationship with the learner to increase the sense of safety in the school and classroom. Use the strength of this attachment to assist the learner in developing positive social responses. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the learner's strengths, passions and interests. Use these to develop activities that will build confidence. <input type="checkbox"/> Create safety spaces and/or calming spaces within the classroom. <input type="checkbox"/> Watch for triggers of aggression, stay calm, and coach “in-the-moment” calming strategies. <input type="checkbox"/> In the moment, use few words; use visual cues (e.g., picture prompts, gestures). Focus on keeping everyone safe and achieving calm. <input type="checkbox"/> For intense “blow outs” allow time to calm down before processing or reviewing rules. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider developing concrete calming boxes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. class “calming” box with strategic calming tools (e.g., soft toy, squeeze ball, calming music tape, plastic bottle with gel inside, soft blanket, draw and erase board, bandage, mirror with a positive sticker on it, etc.). b. learner-specific “calming box” with the above as well as items from home (e.g., family photo, picture book, drawing journal, bubble blowing, stuffy). <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a systematic and consistent pattern for dealing with conflict between learners. <input type="checkbox"/> Use Boardmaker symbols or photographs to develop social scripts to teach pro-social behaviour.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some learners from refugee (and domestic violence) backgrounds have been “incubated in violence”. Some behavioural outcomes related to these backgrounds include: ▪ an over- interpretation of threat ▪ highly reactive and reflexive behaviour (i.e., hitting instead of talking) ▪ limited verbal and physical skills in expressing, calming and interacting ▪ replicating the behaviours seen (e.g., hitting at home) ▪ The concept of property may differ between cultures. Learners may have trouble knowing whether materials in the classroom are communal property or personal property. ▪ A learner brought up in a “touch-to-learn” culture may not know what not to touch and inadvertently cause damage. ▪ A learner with limited home language or English skills may have limited emotional vocabulary to diminish the sensations of emotional intensity ▪ *Physical reactions might reflect “getting” or “avoiding” something. This may serve a deeper need connected to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Assist learners to turn down uncomfortable feelings. State the behaviour, the feeling, and one or two options for calming. Use visuals to illustrate the chosen options (e.g., getting a drink, saying “I am mad at you,” walking away, etc.). □ Teach and model self-regulation skills (e.g., model a learner’s response such as jumping up and down, attach a label such as “angry” and follow up with a modeled calming strategy such as “deep breaths”). □ Coach ways of dealing with disappointment (e.g., “Oh well. Maybe next time!”), and frustration (“I don’t like it when you do that”). Disappointment and frustration are common challenges for early learners in a structured group setting. □ Teach basic emotional vocabulary using visuals. Play a “what does my face show you I am feeling” circle game. □ Schedule opportunities for active learning to reduce fatigue (e.g., play games). □ Use age-appropriate stories to teach adaptation to school skills (e.g., Monster Goes to School). □ Involve parents in developing an intervention plan. □ Make observations based on the A, B, C’s of behaviour. Pay close attention to the Antecedents in order to increase ability to “prevent” behaviour. □ Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student’s need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed.

Listening and Speaking Challenges



Is reluctant to speak / never speaks

 L1 = home language
L2 = English

First ask yourself

- Has the learner's hearing been checked?
- Is the function of the behaviour to "get" something or "avoid" something?*
- Are there indications of language delay in L1 (home language)?
- Are there developmental concerns?
- Is this reluctance generalized across all situations at school?
- Is this reluctance generalized in environments outside of school?
- Does the learner speak at home?
- Does the learner use his/her L1 with others L1 speakers?
- Are there situations when the learner is more willing to speak?
- Are classroom expectations reasonable for this learner?
- Is there a family history of late to speak, reluctance to speak or failure to, speak?
- Has a pediatrician been involved to assess possible causes?

Is reluctant to speak / never speaks

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changing cultures can result in culture shock (e.g., excitement, confusion, disappointment, despair). See Everything ESL Culture Shock ▪ The Silent Period is a normal stage in the acquisition of a second language where language is "consolidated". This period usually lasts for a short amount of time but can continue for up to a year. Typically, the younger the child, the longer the Silent Period. ▪ Selective Mutism is an anxiety-based condition that results in reluctance to speak. Onset is usually 2-4 years of age, and occurs in L1 and L2. Early intervention is key to positive outcome. ▪ Neurological impairment can impact the ability to speak. ▪ The learner may be shy or reluctant to make mistakes. ▪ Cultures vary in how speaking is valued. Some cultures honor listening over speaking and observations over interaction ▪ The learner may have no experience sharing thoughts and ideas in front of others ▪ Some learners are reluctant to speak until they are sure of themselves. The learner may need time to develop confidence in his/her language ability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with the parents/caregivers. Do they see the same lack of speaking at home or in social situations? <input type="checkbox"/> If the family confirms this as a pattern, involve a Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) and/ or a psychologist. Consider a language assessment in L1 with a SLP and a translator. Selective Mutism can have underlying anxiety and speech issues. <input type="checkbox"/> Eliminate the need for speaking for children with Selective Mutism. <input type="checkbox"/> Take the pressure off of speaking for the ELL who cannot communicate. Provide opportunities to request without words (e.g., visual). Meet basic bodily needs with regularly scheduled bio-breaks, with the teacher saying "we are all going to the washroom.") <input type="checkbox"/> Build a strong relationship with the learner to increase the sense of safety in the school and classroom. <input type="checkbox"/> Play with the young ELL in centres. <input type="checkbox"/> Use gestures and visuals to ensure understanding. Model or role play your expectations. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the classroom routines are consistent and posted. Avoid activities that are unplanned to reduce any possible anxiety. <input type="checkbox"/> Help the learner participate in partner activities, providing the language models needed during the activity. Use words and short phrases paired with visuals to support the learner's ability to communicate in the absence of speech. <input type="checkbox"/> Give the learner choices and have them point to their preferred choice. Use objects, pictures and Boardmaker symbols to represent events. Teach the learner to request by pointing to the preferred image. Always give the learner the word that names what they are pointing at and have them repeat it <input type="checkbox"/> Provide an L1 buddy and encourage conversation in their home language. Encourage the buddy to say something in both languages so that the learner makes the connections between the concept or object (L1 to L2).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In learning L2 listening and understanding language tends to outpace speaking skills (i.e., receptive outpaces expressive language). ▪ Initiating 1:1 or whole class conversations with adults can be intimidating for young learners particularly new language learners. ▪ Reluctance to speak might reflect deeper needs related to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Provide centre-related vocabulary (see Early Learning materials on Staff Insite). □ Structure small group activities - games, puzzles, and projects etc. that encourage learner's conversational skills. □ Use Total Physical Response (act out the word or term-TPR) when instructing the class and encourage whole class response. Allow for the actions to function as communication from the ELL and layer targeted vocabulary on top of the action. □ Allow learner to demonstrate requests and learning through drawing and other modalities, etc. □ Provide opportunities to represent learning in visual and kinaesthetic domains. Students can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. build/assemble (e.g., model, clay, diorama, Lego, mobile, collage) b. act (e.g., mime, puppet show, dance, movement) c. write (for 6-8 year old ELLs; e.g., script, journal, poem, story, report, song, story board, graphic text) d. draw (e.g., picture, art, drawing, picture book, paint, graph, posters, diagrams, cartoons, photograph) □ Provide social skills training to assist learner in making connections with peers e.g. social initiation skills, modeling, role-play, use of social stories. □ Encourage parents to speak with their learner in their home language to develop strong L1 vocabulary and grammar skills. □ Consider having picture prompts for common questions (e.g., Can I get a drink? May I go to the bathroom?). □ Identify key vocabulary for all routine activities. Pre-teach key vocabulary and reuse it often during activities □ Provide listening opportunities such as taped books and other technology. □ Eliminate the need for requests (e.g., group trips to the bathroom) that may cause embarrassment if the learner does not speak. Offer opportunities to make requests. □ Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student's need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed.
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Has limited listening and understanding skills



L1 = home language
L2 = English

First ask yourself

- What skills need to be targeted to progress in overall English language proficiency?
- What is the family constellation? Is the learner the youngest and do older siblings act as an interpreter for the learner?
- What is the learner's profile, strengths and areas for growth?
- Is there hearing loss? Are there weak phonological skills in L1 (home language)?
- Are impulsivity control and/or attention issues a factor?
- Are tasks and expectations developmentally appropriate?
- Has there been adequate exposure to the sounds of L2 (English)?

Has limited listening and understanding skills

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations

- The learner may be shy with adults and hesitant to display understanding
- Some learners are very good at following the lead of classmates, giving the impression that they understand the oral directions given. This gives a false impression of their listening and understanding skills. We often expect more of the learner than they are able to comprehend.
- The learner may have limited experience with the content of instruction or the activity.
- The learner may be a beginner language learner, using memorized phrases and/or mimicking other learners but may not understand the language
- Some sounds in English may not exist in L1. The learner may have more difficulty discriminating these sounds and thus understanding the words and their meaning.

Sample classroom strategies

- ☐ Consult with the parents/caregivers regarding the learner's proficiency in L1 (home language) and in English. Consider using a questionnaire (e.g., SLP questionnaire)
- ☐ Pair verbal instructions with gestures, actions and/or visuals
- ☐ Use concrete materials to add meaning to new L2 words.
- ☐ Determine and teach functional vocabulary words that are used in daily activities
- ☐ Schedule opportunities to provide one on one instruction and small group learning.
- ☐ Play with the young ELL in centres.
- ☐ Provide centre-related vocabulary (see Early Learning materials on Staff Insite).
- ☐ Establish classroom rituals to reinforce basic L2 communication skills (e.g., Greeting at classroom door skills "Hello". "Goodbye").
- ☐ Teach verbal initiation of play, "Let's play."
- ☐ Offer multiple opportunities to practice new learning (e.g. 1:1 time with teacher and learner; pairs; small groups, centre play).
- ☐ Choose a limited number of words that connect with concepts being taught, and help learner to make connections with previously learned vocabulary.
- ☐ Build picture walls with new vocabulary terms
- ☐ Use strengths to support areas of growth, (e.g. present the content with visual supports, and have learner incorporate visuals/manipulatives to demonstrate understanding)
- ☐ Seek developmental information in the home language, both use of language and how they understand the language.
- ☐ Use picture books-read often to model language. Read these one on one with ELL
- ☐ Use role play to practice common phrases and new vocabulary
- ☐ Teach developmentally appropriate receptive language, for example "Can I play with you?"
- ☐ Simplify instructions.
- ☐ Provide an adequate amount of wait time before expecting follow through.
- ☐ Offer choices such as "Are you tired or are you hungry?"
- ☐ Choose target vocabulary words. Use these words in pre-teaching and pre-reading in small groups.

Has limited speaking skills



L1 = home language
L2 = English

First ask yourself

- Has the learner been taught how to contribute to a group discussion?
- Has the learner had sufficient time to develop the language skills needed to express themselves?
- Are there auditory problems?
- Is there evidence of speech and language concerns in L1/English?
- Can the learner demonstrate understanding in other modalities (gestures, actions, drawing)
- Does understanding improve if the speed of instruction is slowed down?

Has limited speaking skills

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some families and cultures honor listening over speaking and observations over interaction. ▪ Some families and cultures see a quiet child as a respectful child. ▪ Some families and cultures do not use “command” language, and a learner may not be used to this kind of interaction. ▪ Some families and cultures encourage observation and correctness over a quick response. ▪ Some families and cultures teach children one to one. Learners may not understand that group directions are meant for all learners, including them. ▪ In learning L2 listening and understanding skills tend to outpace speaking skills (receptive outpaces expressive language skills). ▪ Some learners are reluctant to speak until they are sure of themselves. The learner may need time to develop confidence in his/her speaking (i.e., expressive language ability). ▪ Some sounds of English are difficult to produce or enunciate clearly because they don’t exist in the learner’s home language (e.g., T/TH, B/V, R/L). ▪ The learner may be shy or reluctant to make mistakes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Allow the learner to demonstrate proficiency in home language with peer/buddy translator. <input type="checkbox"/> Create life experiences through field trips, activities and experiences to enhance vocabulary and concept development <input type="checkbox"/> Provide visual cues to support speaking skills (i.e., expressive). <input type="checkbox"/> Chunk information into smaller chunks. <input type="checkbox"/> Use modeling and role playing to enhance understanding and provide opportunities to repeat and rehearse common language expressions. <input type="checkbox"/> Use Total Physical Response (TPR - act out the word or term, have learner do the same). <input type="checkbox"/> Provide centre-related vocabulary (see Early Learning materials on Staff Insite). <input type="checkbox"/> Provide the reluctant speaker the option of using an audio or digital recording. <input type="checkbox"/> Program for small group activities that allow increased opportunity for conversation. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide vocabulary and sentence frames to support interactions <input type="checkbox"/> Ask the learner to demonstrate his understanding then help them to put their understanding into words. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider creating dual language books with the Kindergarten to Grade 2 ELL to build vocabulary and increase engagement. See the Dr. Roessingh’s 2009 study and examples at http://homepages.ucalgary.ca/~hroessin. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer choices such as “Are you tired or are you hungry?” Are you hurt or tired?” <input type="checkbox"/> Choose target vocabulary words. Use these words in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. pre-teaching and pre-reading in small groups b. play at centres (see Centre Cards in Early Learning page on Staff Insite)

Has limited ability to attend during large group instruction



L1 = home language
L2 = English

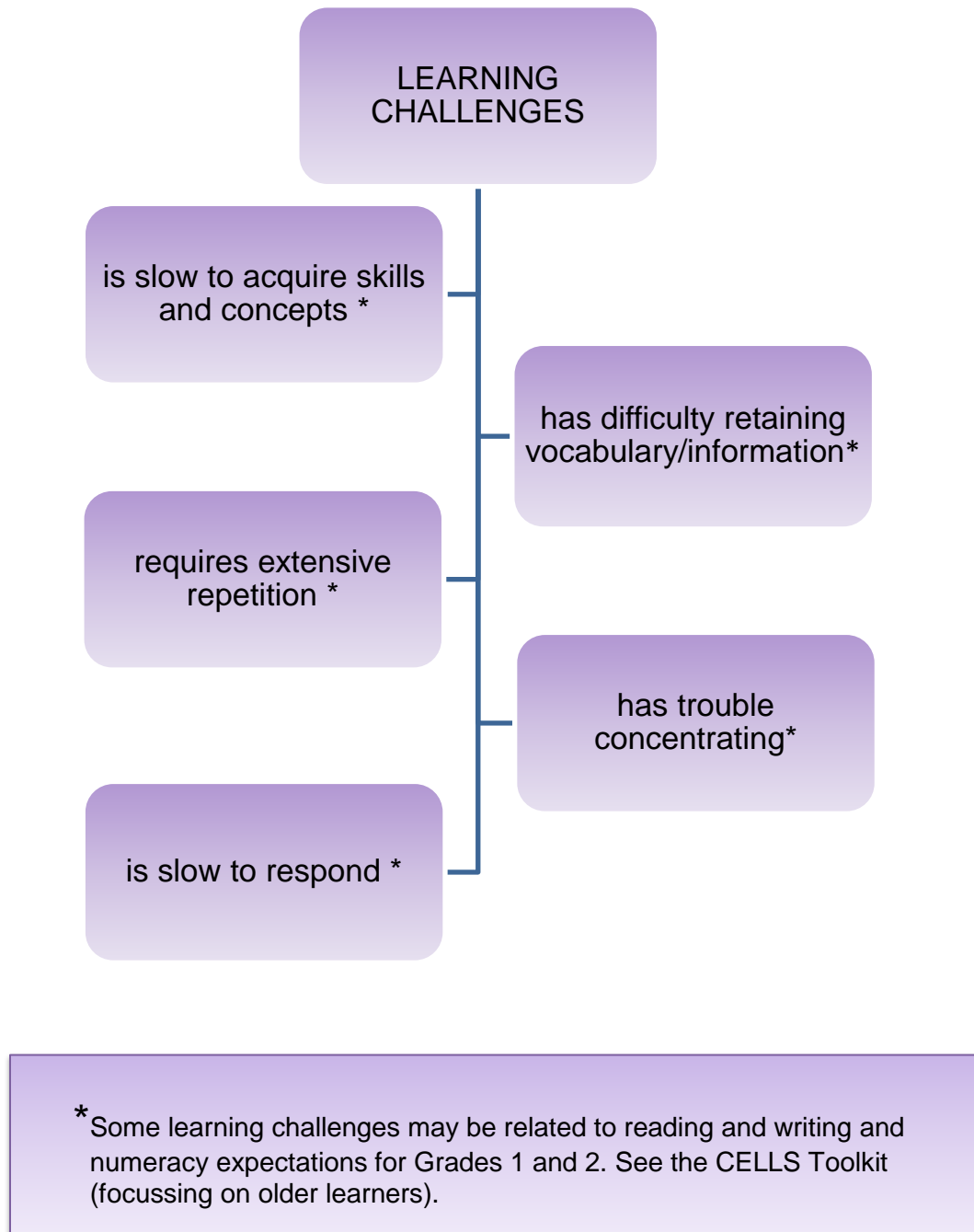
First ask yourself

- Has the learner been taught how to contribute to a group discussion?
- Has the learner had sufficient time to develop the language skills needed to express themselves?
- Are there auditory problems?
- Is there evidence of speech and language concerns in L1/English?
- Can the learner demonstrate understanding in other modalities (gestures, actions, drawing)
- Does understanding improve if the speed of instruction is slowed down?

Has limited ability to attend during large group instruction

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability of young learners to attend to oral instruction is limited. When compounded by instruction in a different language, learners can sustain attention for only a few minutes. ▪ Some cultures use command language more frequently than conversational language. The skill of listening to ideas may be unfamiliar and overwhelming to the learner. ▪ Normal, rapid-rate speech can be difficult and confusing. ELLs learn more easily when the speakers speak slowly and clearly. ▪ Concentrating on a new language is tiring. Each learner will have a “too much talking” point before he or she tunes out. ▪ Too many words in the new L2 language can be too tiring to process. ▪ Comprehension decreases as tasks lengthen. ▪ The classroom environment may be too distracting. ▪ *Lack of focussed attention might reflect a deeper need related to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the classroom routines are consistent, posted, and referred to often, especially at transition times. <input type="checkbox"/> Build a strong relationship with the learner to increase the sense of safety in the school and classroom. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider collecting before directing. See. Dr. Gordon Neufeld, <i>Hold on to Your Kids</i>. <input type="checkbox"/> Teach and model waiting strategies (e.g., wiggling my toes, counting). <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat key information and expectations. <input type="checkbox"/> Let the learners know how long they will need to listen. Use a visual timer. Avoid adding extra instructions once the group has been freed to engage in the activity. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider that a rough guide for listening in home language: 1 minute per year of age. Limit teaching time (5 minute chunks combined with movement breaks up to a max. of 15 minutes). <input type="checkbox"/> Preview key vocabulary and concepts before the presentation. Incorporate a gesture or action along with key vocabulary to increase engagement and meaning making. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide visual models & pictures to support key concepts. <input type="checkbox"/> Review key ideas. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage learner to draw what he/she hears while being in the large group. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide an active and engaged method of reviewing instructions (e.g. verbal prompts such as first, next, then, finally). <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a single instruction and allow time for the learner to follow through before providing additional instructions. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a sequence of the instructions visually. Show the steps. <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce distractions near learning areas. <input type="checkbox"/> Use fewer words combined with gestures and pointing. <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce the amount of teacher talk that occurs before the activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider incorporating various cultural models into listening time to draw upon existing skills (e.g. First Nations Metis and Inuit speaking circle). <input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student’s need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed.

Learning Challenges



Is slow to acquire skills / concepts

First ask yourself

- Does the learner's culture view early learning from the same perspective as the teacher?
- Have I provided opportunities to connect learning with personal experiences?
- Is sufficient time allowed for learner to internalize new learning?
- If the learner is 6-8 years of age and working on decoding skills, have I looked at the CELLS Toolkit for older learners?
- Are there opportunities for repetition and rehearsal of skills/concepts?
- Is there difficulty in home language acquisition?
- Is there a family history of learning difficulties?
- Is there evidence of other developmental delays?
- What stage of acculturation is the learner at? See [Everything ESL Culture Shock](#).

Is slow to acquire skills / concepts

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent expectations of what young learners should learn and the way curriculum will be delivered may be very different from our philosophy, beliefs and programming. ▪ The degree to which parents value school may be connected to the ELLs level of engagement in school. ▪ Consider where the learner began in the measurement of what has been learned. For families who have arrived in Canada in distress, the learner may have come a long way. ▪ An English language learner may be missing key concepts due to limited understanding of key vocabulary. This can also be the case in second generation language learners who have been exposed to English (L2) mainly through television. ▪ Some families interrupt school to bring the learner back to the home country. This disruption may result in delayed acquisition of skills. ▪ A learner's level of acculturation may reflect his/ her parent's level of acculturation. ▪ The learner does not see own culture represented in the classroom resources and has difficulty making personal connections to the material presented. ▪ There may be limited visual cues (e.g., pictures) to support learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with the parents/caregivers. Do they see the same issues at home? Keep parents informed of concerns or issues as they arise. <input type="checkbox"/> Build a strong relationship with the learner and the family to increase the sense of safety in the school and classroom. <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate the learner's successes. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide support with such things as referral forms and appointments. Use this as an opportunity to build positive connections with the parents. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to activate and construct background knowledge. Provide engaging concrete experiences such as field trips <input type="checkbox"/> Provide visual supports - concrete objects, digital photos, Boardmaker representations, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunity for the learner to explain the key vocabulary in his/her own words or through gestures/actions. <input type="checkbox"/> Scaffold learning systematically (i.e. determine what skills are lacking and develop from that point). <input type="checkbox"/> Compare the ELLs skills to peers from the same linguistic cultural group. Remember to take into account differences in the ELLs' family backgrounds, family education, parenting styles, trauma, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> Assess how the classroom environment impacts learning e.g. routines, structure, seating for learning, etc. Adjust to ensure an optimal learning environment. <input type="checkbox"/> Involve DLSA to identify and address parental barriers to school involvement and to inquire into the learner's L1 proficiency. <input type="checkbox"/> Use flexible groupings which include learners with the same L1 <input type="checkbox"/> Consider the length of the activity and ensure that tasks are broken down and supported by visuals. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure messages are short clear and supported by gestures, actions. Use a slow rate of speech. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify strengths and include these skills in learning tasks. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify topics of interest, and teach concepts within those topics (e.g., dinosaurs; big dinosaurs, little dinosaurs, fast and slow etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> Provide preferential seating. <input type="checkbox"/> Assess for retention of vocabulary and concepts within those topics of interest shortly after, later in the day, the next morning, etc.

L1 = home language
L2 = English
DLSA = Diversity and Learning Support Advisor

- | | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Introduce L1 phrases in the class to establish peer connections.<input type="checkbox"/> Gather information on how the parent's specific culture views disabilities. Proceed with caution, as a diagnosed disability may bring shame to the individual, and to the immediate and extended family.<input type="checkbox"/> Consider a strength-based assessment. Move away from the model of disability especially when the family culture views all children as a gift.<input type="checkbox"/> Use "The Fantastic Five" strategies from Staff Insite to support English language development. |
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Has difficulty retaining new vocabulary and information

First ask yourself

- Has there been a history of trauma or complex trauma? Anxiety issues? Significant current stressors? Significant school stressors that impair ability to store new information?
- Is the vocabulary and information culturally relevant with efforts made to connect with learner's prior experience?
- Does the learner have difficulty retaining vocabulary and information at home, in L1 (home language)?
- Has the learner had opportunities to hear and practice the new vocabulary?
- Has the information been presented in multiple ways?
- When additional cueing systems are provided such as pictures, posters, charts etc., is the learner able to relate to the concepts more easily?
- Is there evidence of hearing difficulties? Are there any apparent health issues?
- Does the learner appear to be well rested? Are there consistent routines at home?

Has difficulty retaining new vocabulary and information

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The learner may have limited L2 (English) and does not understand the information. ▪ New vocabulary and information may not be relevant to the learner. ▪ There may be no visuals to support the new vocabulary and information. ▪ The learner may not be given enough opportunities to practice the vocabulary at school. ▪ School vocabulary may not be practiced at home, therefore only reinforced at school, and may need more reinforcement for it to "stick". ▪ Some cultures value active learning and passive learning approaches may not assist the learner to retain information. ▪ The learner may require a shared activity or experience to retain the new concept. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with the parents/caregivers. Do they see the same or similar issues at home? Keep parents informed of concerns or issues as they arise. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify learner passions and interests. Incorporate these passions and interests into the classroom activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Connect new vocabulary to experience and interests (e.g., zoo trip and then animal names, etc.). Construct and activate background knowledge. <input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate a hands-on, shared activity to teach the new concept. Use this event later as a cue or prompt. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide multiple exposures to vocabulary and information with gestures, visual supports and concrete objects. <input type="checkbox"/> Suggest some memory strategies for use at home and school (e.g. give one to two directions at a time, have learner repeat them back, then observe the learner engage in the assigned task). <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure reasonable proximity when providing instructions. Diminish background noise. Check hearing. <input type="checkbox"/> Speak slowly but naturally, shorten the length of sentences <input type="checkbox"/> Use flexible groupings which include learners with the same home language. <input type="checkbox"/> Allow learner to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide more response time and more think time. <input type="checkbox"/> Notice things the learner does remember (e.g., names, directions in the building, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate new information into the context of play. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the CELLS Toolkit for older learners when a Grade 1 or Grade 2 learner has challenges in Writing include using the same words, phrases, ideas in every piece of writing. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the CELLS Toolkit for when a Grade 1 or Grade 2 learner has challenges with retaining information/ vocabulary while Reading. <input type="checkbox"/> Use "The Fantastic Five" strategies from Staff Insite to support English language development.

Requires extensive repetition

First ask yourself

- Is there unusual stress/anxiety in the family?
- Is the function of the behaviour to “get” something or “avoid” something?*
- Is learner getting enough exposure to concepts to allow him/her to integrate the new learning?
- Is the learner able to connect the new learning to prior experience?
- Are there ample opportunities for active learning?
- Are there enough visuals to support learning?
- Is there evidence of hearing difficulties?
- Are there sensory needs?

Requires extensive repetition

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultures may vary in the amount of direction and in the number of repeated commands. Once may be only a prompt, not a directive. ▪ Some cultures value correct completion over incomplete attempts. The learner may be hesitant to try an activity and risk failure. ▪ Learner may not have sufficient vocabulary to make the instruction meaningful. ▪ The learner may need more supports (visuals, concrete objects, gestures, actions) to support understanding. See “The Fantastic Five” to support Grade 1 to 2 learners in Staff Insite. ▪ The learner may not have had enough exposure to listening and speaking English. ▪ English words might be pronounced and used in a different way at home. ▪ Grammatical structures can vary between languages, and the new L2 (English) can be confusing to understand as a result. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with the parents/caregivers. Do they see the same issues at home? Has this been consistent through life, or has it changed recently? Keep parents informed of concerns or issues as they arise. <input type="checkbox"/> Present information in a variety of ways (visuals, pictures, concrete objects, gestures movement, music, movement, SmartBoard,) to reinforce concepts. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for learner to express what is known about concepts in a variety of ways (e.g. through drawing, acting out, gestures). <input type="checkbox"/> Express ideas clearly with few words repeated. Have learner repeat back and demonstrate his/her understanding. <input type="checkbox"/> Use siblings, parents in classroom, peer buddies, older-aged buddies to support the learner and increase active engagement. <input type="checkbox"/> Move close to the learner, speak directly to them, and diminish background noise. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that medical and auditory issues are ruled out. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the CELLS Toolkit for older learners when a Grade 1 or Grade 2 learner requires extensive repetition due to misspelling words while writing. <input type="checkbox"/> Use “The Fantastic Five” strategies from Staff Insite to support English language development.

Has trouble concentrating


L1 = home language
L2 = English

First ask yourself

- Are expectations developmentally appropriate and connected to curriculum expectations?
- Are there family circumstances that might impact learner's ability to concentrate?
- Is the ELL getting enough nutrition and sleep?
- Does the learner seem tired or overwhelmed?
- Does this behaviour occur consistently throughout the school day or at specific times (e.g. large group instruction)?
- Is the rate of speech heard by the learner too rapid to follow?
- Does the learner spend a lot of time at home, watching TV and/or playing computer games?

Has trouble concentrating

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The learner may be experiencing acculturation challenges. ▪ The learner does not understand enough of the information presented to be able to focus and attend. ▪ The learner may require extensive visual and concrete support to understand the concepts and connect them to prior knowledge and experience. ▪ The learner may be tired from learning the language and trying to follow classroom expectations. ▪ The communication style at home may have little verbal expression. The learner is overwhelmed. ▪ The ELL maybe looking at peers to help understand what is happening. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with the parents or caregivers. Do they see the same concentration issues at home? What strategies work at home? <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the classroom routines and daily schedule are consistent and posted with familiar visuals. <input type="checkbox"/> Build a strong relationship with the learner to increase the sense of safety in the school and classroom. <input type="checkbox"/> Find area of learner interest and offer opportunity for the learner to explore that area. <input type="checkbox"/> Use visuals, models, diagrams, video clips etc. to put the language in context. <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in learning that involves the whole body. Consider role play manipulatives, puppetry, dance, music, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide physical activity breaks, language breaks and “sensory breaks” on a regular basis. <input type="checkbox"/> Use flexible groupings which include learners with the same L1 (home language). <input type="checkbox"/> Speak in short, clear sentences, using a slow rate of speech. Give only 1-2 instructions at a time. <input type="checkbox"/> Work one on one with the learner to get them started on the activity and ensure that the directions and expectations have been understood. <input type="checkbox"/> Allow calming breaks in a designated quiet space equipped with calming materials. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep large group instructional time to a minimum. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide preferential seating. <input type="checkbox"/> Chunk activities into manageable sizes for student success. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student's need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the CELLS Toolkit for older learners when learners have challenges in Reading and Writing strands of language. <input type="checkbox"/> Use “The Fantastic Five” strategies from Staff Insite to support English language development.

Is slow to respond to questions / tasks

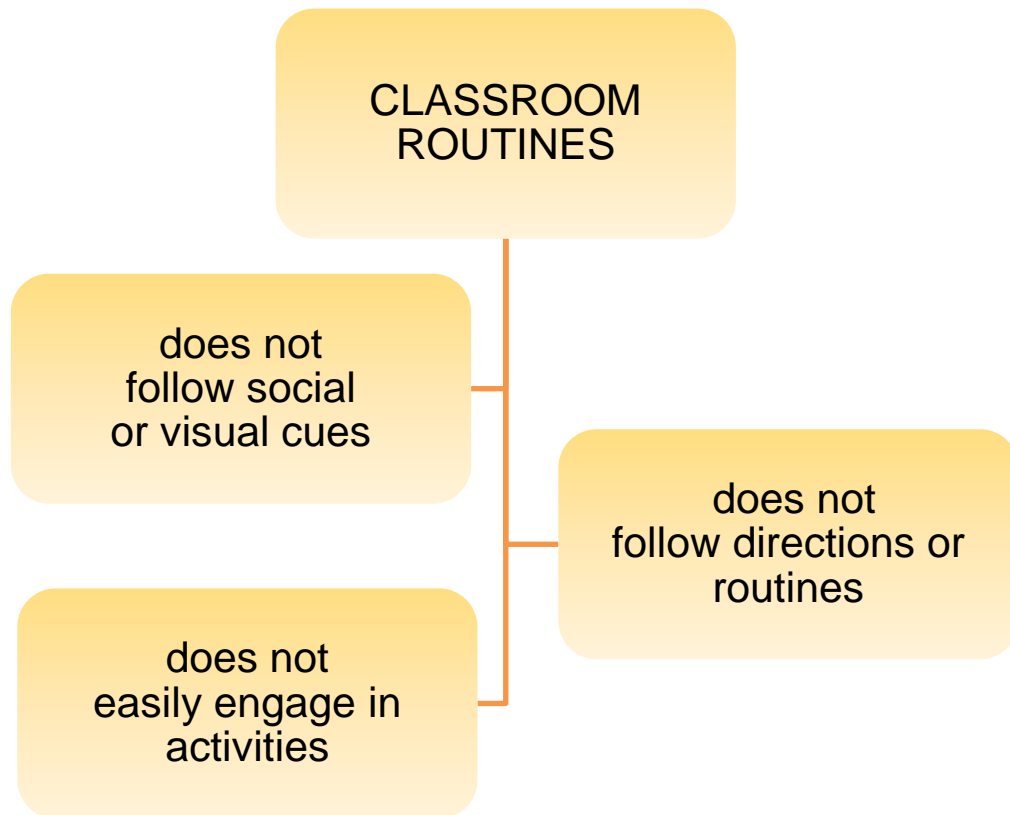
First ask yourself

- Have I given the learner sufficient time and instruction for them to understand the concepts and questions?
- Does the learner provide a response when scaffolds are provided?
- Are there speech delays in the learner's home language?
- Is the instruction too long/complex for comprehension?
- Does this learner have challenges remembering?
- Does this learner have overall weakness in processing speed?
- In what situations is the learner confident in their responses/interactions?
- Is this learner hesitant to take risks for fear of failure?
- Does this learner often approach new tasks slowly?
- Is the material and activity engaging for the learner?
- Are there existing family issues that impact the learner's ability to engage and participate?

Is slow to respond to questions / tasks

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultures may vary in the amount of direction and in the number of repeated commands. Once may be only a prompt, not a directive. ▪ Some cultures value correct completion over incomplete attempts. The learner may be hesitant to try an activity and risk failure. ▪ Learner may not have sufficient vocabulary to make the instruction meaningful. ▪ The learner may need more supports (visuals, concrete objects, gestures, actions) to support understanding. See "The Fantastic Five" to support Grade 1 to 2 learners in Staff Insite. ▪ The learner may not have had enough exposure to listening and speaking English. ▪ English words might be pronounced and used in a different way at home. ▪ Grammatical structures can vary between languages, and the new L2 (English) can be confusing to understand as a result. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Consult with the parents/caregivers. Do they see the same issues at home? Has this been consistent through life, or has it changed recently? Keep parents informed of concerns or issues as they arise. ❑ Present information in a variety of ways (visuals, pictures, concrete objects, gestures movement, music, movement, SmartBoard,) to reinforce concepts. ❑ Provide opportunities for learner to express what is known about concepts in a variety of ways (e.g. through drawing, acting out, gestures.) ❑ Express ideas clearly with few words repeated. Have learner repeat back and demonstrate his/her understanding. ❑ Use siblings, parents in classroom, peer buddies, older-aged buddies to support the learner and increase active engagement. ❑ Move close to the learner, speak directly to them, and diminish background noise. ❑ Ensure that medical and auditory issues are ruled out. ❑ Use the CELLS Toolkit for older learners when a Grade 1 or Grade 2 learner requires extensive repetition due to misspelling words while writing. ❑ Use "The Fantastic Five" strategies from Staff Insite to support English language development.

Classroom Routines



Does not follow social or visual cues

 L1 = home language
L2 = English

First ask yourself

- Has the learner had previous experience in following routines, rules, and direction in a classroom setting?
- Does the learner have the language skills needed to understand what is expected?
- Are there too many instructions for the learner to understand and follow?
- Are the instructions direct or indirect? Some learners are only used to following direct instructions.
- Are the expectations supported by visuals, modeling, and rehearsal?
- Is the learner motivated to join group activities?

Does not follow social or visual cues

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The learner may have limited social experience. ▪ The learner may not notice or recognize social clues that are obvious to learners who have had previous school experience. ▪ The learner may have impulsivity or attention challenges that make him/her unable to attend to visual or social cues. ▪ Learning a new language may be tiring and overwhelming. The learner may be generally fatigued. ▪ Some families and cultures rely on parent commands to control behaviour. Visual cues may not be recognized by the learner as an expectation or directive. ▪ Visual cues may not be culturally or personally relevant. ▪ The L2 content may require more processing time than the learner is given. The learner may be slowing down to learn and may not be in a position to attend to visual or social cues. ▪ *Make observations based on the functions of behaviour. Does the student have a need related to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory? Is the student seeking to get or avoid something? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with the parents or caregivers. Do they see their child as not being to read or follow social cues? <input type="checkbox"/> Remember the importance of building relationships with the family. When families feel connected it results in increased parental support of classroom engagement and improved instructional readiness on the part of the learner. <input type="checkbox"/> Build a strong relationship with the ELL and the ELL's family to increase a sense of safety and comfort in the classroom and school. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide one on one coaching in "reading and following of visual schedules and social scripts. <input type="checkbox"/> Before each transition, refer to the class visual schedule to assist all learners to prepare for the next activity. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify what allows you to capture the learner's attention (e.g., sound, touch, visuals) and incorporate that strategy into daily routines. <input type="checkbox"/> Help the learner to watch classmates so he/she will know what to do. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop and practice skills in following social and visual cues (e.g., play follow-the-leader games. Have learners take turns leading and following). <input type="checkbox"/> Connect learner to a "Bilingual Buddy" to provide opportunities to speak/listen in their home language. <input type="checkbox"/> Set up flexible groupings which might include someone who speaks the same language as the learner. <input type="checkbox"/> Search out culturally-relevant books and websites. Include stories from this learner's culture within the story time opportunities. <input type="checkbox"/> Assist the family to access dual language books and websites http://www.fareasternbooks.com/. <input type="checkbox"/> Access culturally relevant books and characters. <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce L1 (home language) phrases to other learners in the class to establish peer connections (e.g., "How many different ways are there so say hello?"). <input type="checkbox"/> Learn and investigate cultural events (e.g., CBE cultural diversity calendar on-line). <input type="checkbox"/> Have the learner teach or share something about/from the home-culture (e.g., family treasure, picture, family visitors, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> Assist parents in understanding the importance of maintaining their home language http://www.peelschools.org/parents/documents/DONEUsedual-languagebookstoboostyourchild_sliteracy.doc.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Provide “Language Breaks” and body breaks for the learner to relax and unwind.<input type="checkbox"/> When speaking with ELLs be aware of the need to adjust speech. Reduce the amount of words, recycle vocabulary, reassess to see if the learner is understanding and expressing). Use “The Fantastic Five” strategies from Staff Insite to support English language development.<input type="checkbox"/> Remember to speak clearly and use visual supports, etc.).<input type="checkbox"/> Provide daily opportunities for small group and peer interaction with “scripted conversations” (e.g. How are you today? What is your favorite ...?).<input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for small group and cooperative learning activities (e.g., build a structure out of blocks).<input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student’s need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult with an Early Learning Strategist or an OT as needed. |
|--|--|



Does not engage easily in classroom activities

First ask yourself

- Is the learner experiencing culture shock or acculturation issues? See [Everything ESL Culture Shock](#).
- Is the learner familiar with school or classroom expectations?
- Is the learner naturally shy and anxious in social situations?
- Is the learner naturally hesitant or cautious when approaching new activities?
- Does the learner have the communicative and social ability to engage with others?
- Are there particular gender expectations within the family or culture that might explain a hesitancy to express needs/wants?
- Is there a cultural or family emphasis on completing tasks to “perfection”?
- What might motivate this learner to engage?

Does not engage easily in classroom activities

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited English may result in not understanding instructions. The learner may have to wait and observe first. ▪ In some families and cultures it is respectful to allow others to go first. ▪ Some learners are hesitant to take risks and will choose to not participate rather than risk failure. ▪ In some families and cultures learners are encouraged to watch and learn first, to rely on cues and observation skills. Shame, to self and family, will result if the activity is not done well. ▪ In some families and cultures there are limited expectations of young children at home. ▪ *Not engaging might reflect “getting” or “avoiding” something. This may serve a deeper need connected to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with the parents or caregivers. Do they see the same slow-to-engage responses at home? Has this been consistent through life, or has it changed recently? <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the classroom routines are consistent, supported with visuals, posted, and referred to often. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer multiple invitations to play. <input type="checkbox"/> Model the expected behaviours. <input type="checkbox"/> Build a strong relationship with the learner to increase the sense of safety and to develop trust. Ensure there are opportunities for 1:1 teacher-learner interaction. <input type="checkbox"/> Build a strong relationship with the parents. Feeling connected has impact on parental support of classroom engagement and in turn on the learner’s instructional readiness. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate opportunities for the learner to be a class helper and leader which will increase self-confidence. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities to “teach” another learner in a one-to-one situation (utilize identified areas of strengths and interests). <input type="checkbox"/> Call upon the learner when the learner is most likely to respond successfully. Provide options for the learner to provide responses (e.g. verbal, drawing, actions, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> Experiment with various groupings and various topics to determine when the learner is most likely to readily engage. <input type="checkbox"/> If possible, observe the learner when interacting with someone from the same cultural group. <input type="checkbox"/> Give opportunities to provide meaningful contributions in quiet, non-threatening ways (e.g., organizing the books, delivering notes). <input type="checkbox"/> “Normalize” and model making mistakes as a part of learning for the whole group. Mistakes = learning experiences. <input type="checkbox"/> When asking learners to engage in new activities, try “I Do, We Do, You Do” (Model, Practice, Do: uses adult modeling of the task, practices with the group and possibly provide peer modeling, allows the learner to attempt the task independently or with some teacher support). <input type="checkbox"/> Play follow-the-leader games. Have learners take turns leading and following). <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a “buddy” system with peers to act as role models and to provide cues. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide constant praise and feedback to acknowledge both attempts and successes.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Always pair verbal directions with non-verbal cues (visuals, gestures).<input type="checkbox"/> Allow many opportunities for practice and consider 1:1 “pre-teaching” of new skills and/or vocabulary.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student’s need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult an OT or Functional Behaviour Strategist as needed. |
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Does not follow directions or routines

First ask yourself

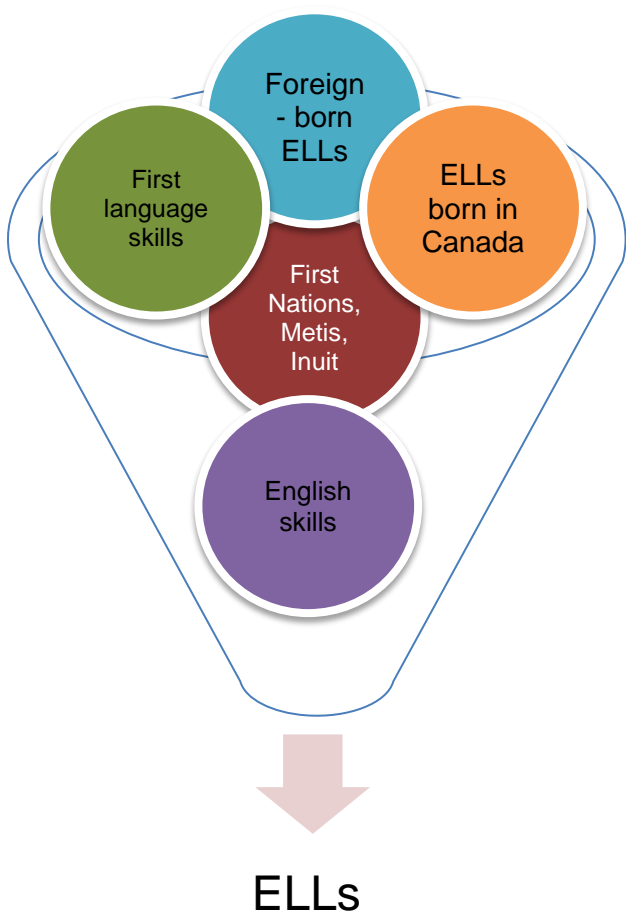
- Is the learner familiar with the routines and expectations of the classroom?
- Does the learner have the necessary language skills to understand the verbal directions?
- Have the routines been demonstrated and modeled by adults and other learners?
- Are the classroom routines posted through visuals?
- If visual supports or peer modeling are provided does the learner more readily follow the directions?
- Has the family established consistent routines that the child is expected to follow at home?
- Is the learner an independent thinker who is used to following his own lead? Is this valued in the home?
- Are there opportunities take on the roles of leading and following in the classroom?
- Is the apparent unwillingness to follow routines the result of attention issues or impulsivity rather than non-compliance?
- Do the parents have community supports available to coach them in developmentally appropriate expectations?

Does not follow directions or routines

Linguistic, cultural and other considerations	Sample classroom strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The learner may be unfamiliar with classroom expectations and behaviours. They need to be explicitly taught in this new school setting. ▪ Some families and cultures value learning through exploration and natural consequences. Following directions is not necessarily valued. ▪ Some families and cultures value an external locus of control therefore learners may be looking for strong cues from the teacher. ▪ Classroom routines and expectations may involve tasks typically completed for the learner by adults in the home. ▪ The learner may not understand the purpose of some routines such as washing hands, lining up, walking quietly. ▪ Make observations based on the functions of behaviour. Does the student have a need related to escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory? Is the student seeking to get or avoid something? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Consult with the parents or caregivers. Discuss strategies that are successful in the home. ❑ Build a learner/family profile including cultural background, family dynamics, and home language skills. ❑ Brainstorm, with parents, around practical ways to support routines at home and at school (e.g. clean up). ❑ Build a strong relationship with the learner to increase the sense of safety in the school and classroom. Assist the learner in developing positive social responses. ❑ Ensure the classroom routines are consistent and posted and referred to often, especially during transition times. ❑ Add group or individual visual task cards (one or two at a time) to support understanding, motivation and success (e.g. "First - Then"). ❑ Teach and model communication skills to familiarize the learner with such routines as "speak first, and then listen" (consider trying an object such as a "talking stick" to represent when to speak and when to listen). ❑ Develop skills in following social and visual cues (e.g., Play 'follow the leader' games. Learners take turns leading and following). ❑ Ensure tasks are a realistic match to the learner's language proficiency. ❑ Provide an older "buddy" fluent in the learner's home language and/or culture to serve as a mentor. "Buddy" with a classroom peer to help with modeling and cueing of familiar routines. ❑ Be consistent; provide clear, specific, meaningful praise/acknowledgement for positive behaviour. ❑ Provide appropriate strategies to meet the student's need for escape, attention, something tangible and/ or something sensory. Consult an Early Learning Strategist or OT as needed.

Understanding Learners and Gathering Information

Understanding Young ELLs



In this document the term ELL includes foreign-born and Canadian-born learners with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

This diversity includes learners who:

- are First Nations, Metis and Inuit learners.
- have strong home languages other than English
- have weak home language(s) other than English
- have weak English language skills
- have strong English language skills

Understanding young ELLs requires us to recognize that:

- developmental differences exist between learners regardless of their cultural origin. Background experience has a significant impact on the learner's ability to make sense of new learning regardless of cultural origin
- differences in ability, school readiness and emotional regulation exist within student groups regardless of cultural origin
- the process of acculturation is complex and may result in behaviours that are misinterpreted and may mask as special education indicators.
- curriculum must be culturally responsive in order to represent the experiences of ELLs and their families.

Factors that can create challenges for young ELLs include but are not limited to:

- adjusting to the school
- adjustment to Canadian culture
- ability to learn in an English-speaking classroom
- history of trauma and loss

More information on each of these factors follows.

Adjusting to School

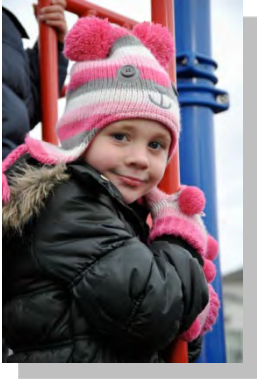
Factors that impact adjusting to school include (but are not limited to):

- The learner may have little or no experience being away from caregivers.
- The separation from family members and home land may have been traumatic, and learners may be living with new family members now.
- The learner may have limited experience or a natural aversion to being in a large group.
- The importance of independence in the classroom may contrast with the expectations of dependence within and between cultures.
- The value placed on education and the role of parents in their child's education may vary greatly within and between families and cultures.
- Based on their own school experience, parents' expectations of what the child should be doing at school may be very different from our view of developmentally appropriate programming.
- Gender roles vary within and between families and cultures. Some may place all females (adult and child) below male children in the social hierarchy.
- The importance placed on emotional regulation skills may vary within and between families and cultures. Children may not have been taught the physical and emotional regulation skills we expect in school.



Adjusting to Canadian Culture

Many young ELLs face the challenge of adjusting to Canadian culture. The degree of the challenge depends upon individual, family and cultural factors and includes:



- **Acculturation**

Acculturation is a process. Individuals can “jump back” to earlier stages under stress. Various family members may be at differing stages of acculturation. How families support adjustment to Canadian culture can directly impact the learner’s feelings about Canada and schooling and friendships.

- **Peer Exposure**

Children may have had limited exposure to other children outside of their family and/or home culture. This lack of experience can increase the intensity of adjustment to Canadian culture.

- **Support for Parents**

Parents may have no home community in Calgary. This may limit a learner’s contact with other children within both the home culture and within Canadian culture.

- **Developmental Variance**

Developmental differences can be viewed quite negatively by some cultures. Some families are isolated by their home community when a child has deficits. This limits social contact for both parent and child, and increases isolation.

- **Immigration**

Parents may have concerns regarding their immigration to Canada. Some parents may limit exposure of their children to activities and events in their community due to the perceived fear that immigration authorities might take away their right to remain in Canada.

- **Neighbourhood Safety**

Parents may be concerned about the safety of their neighbourhoods. This may relate to prior experiences as well as the challenges of poorer neighbourhoods. Parents may not allow their children to play in neighborhood settings, and purposefully limit exposure to others.

- **Family Dynamics**

Parents with young children are challenged with both keeping the home language alive and supporting the family’s English language proficiency. As primary caregivers mothers of young children may delay their own English skill development. This can impact family dynamics when the children begin speaking better English than the adult caregiver.

Learning English – Some Underlying Challenges

Learning English, even in an English-speaking classroom, may be complicated for young ELLs. Some factors may include:

- Learners may have weak or limited “home language” skills which makes it more difficult to learn English. Consult with Speech-Language Pathologist to help clarify.
- Multiple languages may be spoken at home or within the family with no evident strength in any language.
- Many Canadian born children come to us with lower than expected language skills. This impacts their ability to fully integrate and acculturate. Sample reasons might be:
 - Their main care giver may be a grandparent with limited language skills.
 - The day-time caregiver may have limited English language skills.
- Children may have weak auditory processing skills.
- Children may have a history of ear infections and thus delayed maturation for hearing sound.
- Families and school staff may not understand the emphasizing oral (i.e., speaking and listening) in the process of acquiring English before emphasizing reading and writing skills.

Coping with Trauma and Loss

Trauma and loss can impede learning. Some factors include:

- There may be stresses at home that limit the child’s ability to focus at school (e.g. food/housing/financial concerns; family violence, primary caregiver’s emotional functioning).
- Parents may have a history of trauma and this may impact the ELL’s emotional development. The intergenerational transmission of trauma may be multigenerational.
- Resiliency factors such as community support, extended family support, (particularly for the mother), may be absent.
- Some cultures blame mom for a child’s special needs.
- Poor English skills may diffuse the mother’s status within the home and her influence over her child.
- Parent’s acculturation stage may be limiting exposure and therefore the child’s progress.

Oral Language Development for Early Learners

A teacher's role in the classroom is to look for or create opportunities for young children to engage in rich conversations that arise naturally over the course of their daily routine, play time, and shared reading time.

Hanen approach

Why is development of oral language (listening and speaking) important?

For early learners thinking, learning, and language are interrelated. Oral language development (listening and speaking) is crucial to the development of social and academic skills. Key frameworks used at CBE include the Hanen approach, as well as Tabor's *One Child, Two Languages* model.

Oral language:

- Is part of communication for both basic conversation and social interaction (BICS) and academic learning (CALP)?
- Includes both listening and speaking skills. Oral language development includes the opportunity to hear the basic sounds of language, relate these sounds to meanings, and respond verbally.
- Is a precursor to reading and writing. Challenges with oral language, specifically phonemic awareness, are connected to learners being at-risk of having a reading disability.
- Is built on awareness of the basic sounds of language, specifically phonemic awareness.
- Is more challenging for some learners, particularly learners:
 - With a history of ear infections.
 - With language delays.
 - From cultures that have minimal parent-child verbal interactions.
 - Whose home language contains phonemes that differ significantly from English.
 - With weaknesses in auditory discrimination in their home language.

How can I support oral language development for ELLS?

Building Skills in Hearing the Sounds of Language

adapted Linan-Thompson & Vaughn, 2007

rhyming sounds

identifying words
with same initial
sound

isolating the
initial sound

categorizing
onset and rime

isolating middle
and ending
sounds

blending sounds
into words

KG learners often reach the blending stage

segmenting or
dividing sounds

adding
phonemes

deleting
phonemes

substituting
phonemes

Teachers can focus on both **engagement** and developing awareness of the sounds of speech including intonation, rhyme, uniqueness of sounds, etc. (i.e., **phonological awareness**). Strategies to foster engagement and phonological awareness follow.

Engagement strategies for learners who are at-risk for challenges around listening and speaking include:

- offering speaking and listening opportunities through natural opportunities including the learner's areas of interest and play
- creating frequent low-risk opportunities
- using small groups and 1:1 interactions
- using cooperative groupings
- calling the learner's name to encourage listening and participation
- responding positively to first attempts
- responding promptly to any initiation of communication, including non-verbal or any production of a speech sound
- using gestures
- supplementing with visuals (including real-world objects)
- focusing on sharing meaning
- including culturally relevant material to the learners and to their families (e.g., celebrations, greetings, pictures)
- incorporating culturally common tools for engagement including: music, metaphor, recitation, ritual, concrete objects to manipulate, collaborative learning events, etc.
- offering props to support listening and speaking
- changing teacher position and learner positions in the classroom
- introducing a new word by saying it, showing what it means, connecting it to the learner's experiences, and saying the word again
- changing voice or adding novelty to increase interest
- asking a question
- making a personal comment
- giving the child a meaningful role
- eliciting higher order thinking skills
- **promoting the use of first language** in the class and at home to encourage higher level thinking

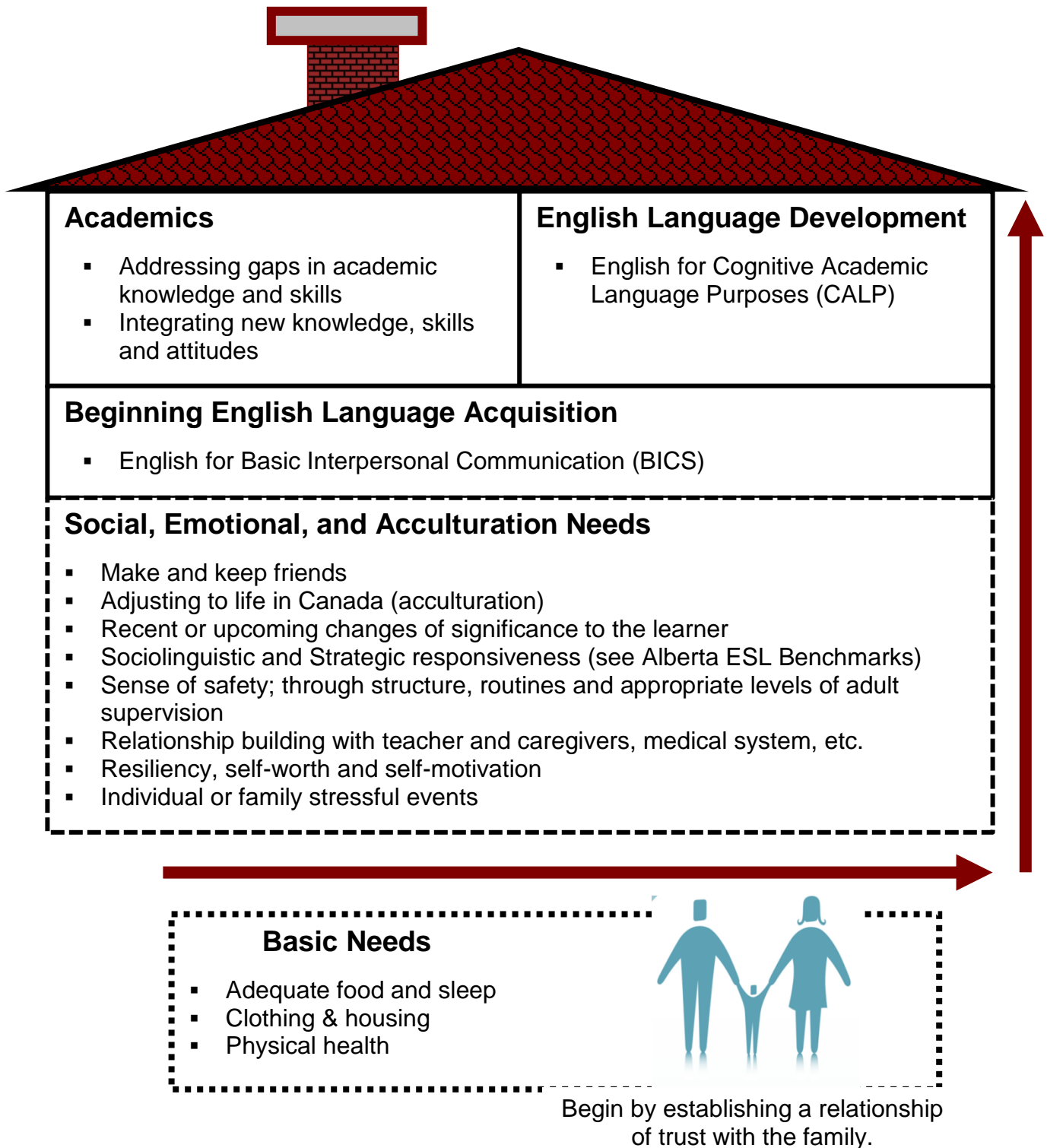
Strategies to support the gradual, step-by-step building of **phonological awareness** include:

- explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, including modelling the task and offering opportunities to practice
- use of games and songs beginning with rhyming sounds, then same initial sounds, etc.
- intentional focus on sound unit **not reading, writing or letter name**, using this process:
 - a. **focus** on the sound (e.g., words that rhyme with “play”, or later, words that start with the sound “mmmmm”)
 - b. **only incidentally** showing the matching letter “and this is what it looks like when we read” and “this is how we write it when we write words”
 - c. **only casually** mentioning the name of the letter, as it is the least important aspect, and most misleading information for learners
- see many online supports including PhonologicalAwareness.org

What if oral language development is slower than expected?

- Use a phonemic awareness screener to identify possible areas of concern.
- Use some of the strategies in this Toolkit (see Communication).
- Consult with an Early Learning or Area Strategist and/or Specialist.
- Consult with a Speech - Language Pathologist.

Prioritizing the Needs of Young ELLS



Adapted from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Kilpatrick, A.C. & Holland, T.P. (1999) *Working with Families: An Integrative Model by Level of Need*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Gathering Information

Making observations

Classroom observations provide useful information to inform instruction and instructional interventions. Remember that behaviour is a form of communication.

Set aside time to make observations when you are confronted with behaviours that are troublesome. During these observations it is important to ask yourself, “What is my learner telling me through his/her behaviour?” You may want to request observations from a member of your school learning team or an Early Learning Strategist.

ABC's of behaviour

This is one useful approach to employ when observing (and documenting) behaviour.

- **Antecedent** – What takes place before the behaviour? This may be a trigger for the learner.
- **Behaviour** – What is the behaviour? This needs to be identified, without judgements or assumptions about the intent of the behaviour.
- **Consequence** – What happens after the behaviour? This is important because it helps us understand why the learner keeps using this behaviour to meet his/her needs. This information will be useful when planning a socially and culturally appropriate replacement behaviour that serves the same function for the learner.

Functions of behaviour

Behaviour is a form of communication and occurs for one of four reasons:

1. **Escape:** wanting to escapes /avoids something the learner experiences as unpleasant.
2. **Attention:** gaining some form of social attention or a reaction from other people.
3. **Tangible:** getting a tangible item (e.g., toys, food) or gaining access to a desired activity.

Sensory: creating an internal state of pleasure or removing an internal state of displeasure. This occurs without the involvement of another person.

Context of behaviour

- Are the classroom expectations personally & developmentally appropriate?
- Are the expectations in line with the Kindergarten Program Statement?
- How do the parents describe and understand this behaviour?
- Are the learner's basic needs being met? Does this learner experience:
 - adequate sleep
 - adequate diet
 - medical attention

Ask, “Is this young learner trying to **get**

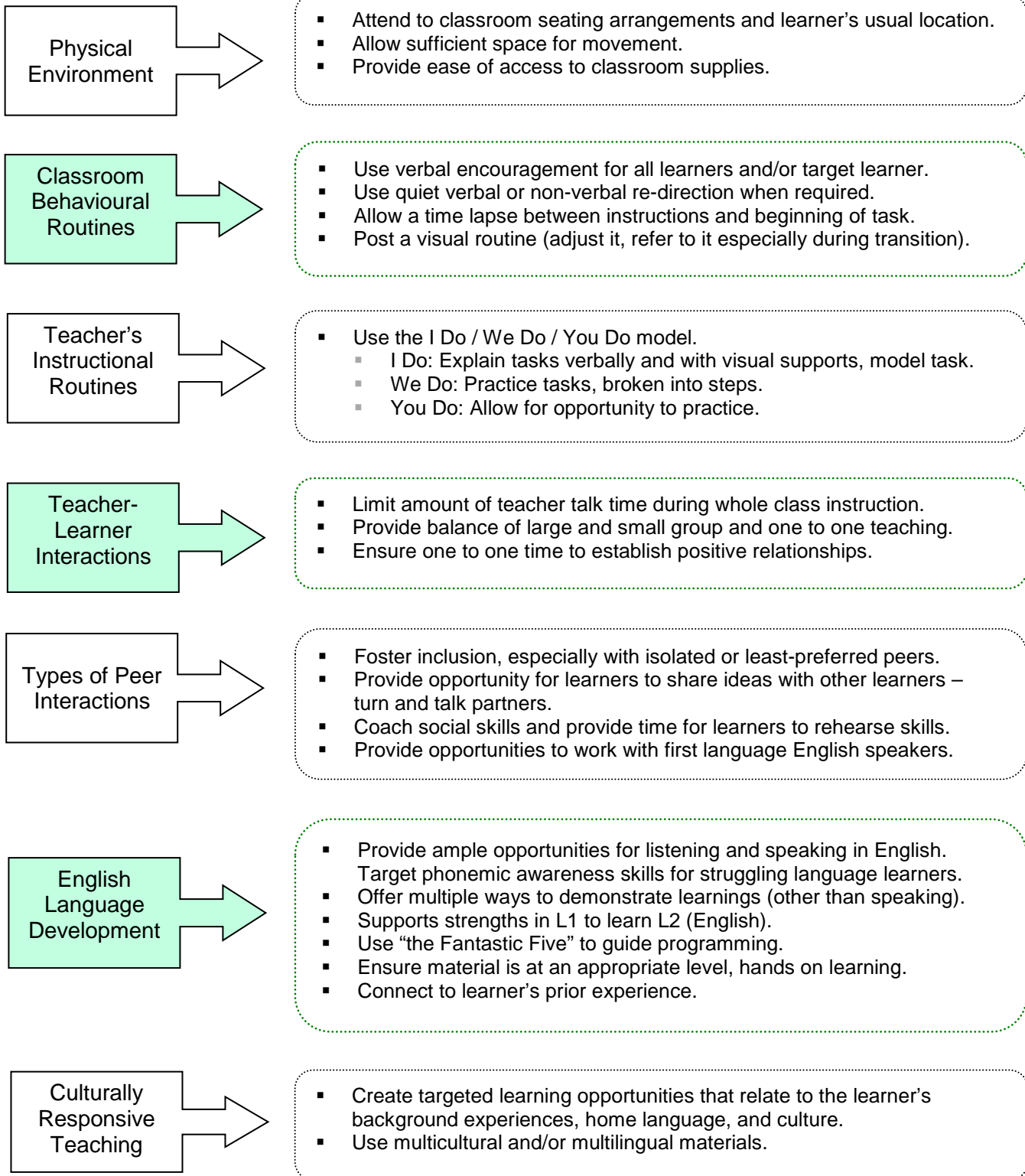
- peer attention
- adult attention or acknowledgement
- preferred items or events
- sensory input e.g. physical activity
- emotional release e.g. express frustration
- a sense of control, over structure or routines?”

Ask, “Is this young learner trying to **avoid**

- peer attention
- adult attention or acknowledgement
- sensory overload e.g. noise, touch, bright lights
- emotional release e.g. crying, outburst
- non-preferred events, tasks or activities
- structure or routines?”

Considering the Classroom Environment

Consider the following categories as a way of focusing observations.



School Supports

Continuum of Support for Young ELLs

Based on *Response to Intervention Model and the Universal Design for Learning Framework*.



Universal instruction

Quality classroom instruction that is flexible and dynamic and addresses the needs of all learners, including the needs of young ELLs should include:

- Multiple means of presenting and representing content knowledge to learners using carefully selected, differentiated, instructional strategies that target language and concept acquisition.
- Multiple means for learners to represent/express their understanding.
- Multiple ways of ensuring learner engagement in tasks and motivation for them to continue with tasks and investigations.
- Strategic planning of instruction for learners that takes into account the learner's language proficiency, cultural background, content knowledge, interests and goals.
- Provision of flexible groupings.

These following strategies will benefit all learners by building trust and confidence, enhancing learning opportunities, and decreasing the effects of challenging behaviour in the classroom.

- Provide a visual schedule of each day's events, review the schedule at the beginning of the day and continue to reference it throughout the day.
- Ensure that classroom routines and expectations are reviewed often and supported with visuals that will help ELLs to learn and understand these expectations.
- Build a strong relationship with the learner and family to increase the sense of safety in the school and in the classroom.
- Find an area of learner interest and provide opportunities for learners to explore their interest.
- Plan your daily schedule to include many opportunities to work with small groups and one on one.
- Build a strong relationship with parent/caregiver.
 - Parents are their children's first teachers. Be sure to consult with them to help you understand their child. Do they see the same things at home that you are seeing at school? What do the behaviours mean to the parents? Discuss strategies that are successful in the home.
 - If using written communication with parents avoid educational jargon and consider the parents' literacy level and English Language Proficiency. Use visuals to support your communication with parents as well.

Targeted instruction

Direct, explicit instruction to address gaps in background knowledge, cultural experiences and English language and literacy skills, delivered through small group instruction that focuses on:

- engaging learners in experiences that build background knowledge around essential concepts,
- building background knowledge of new cultural ideas and bridging between learners' cultural background, other cultures and Canadian culture,
- language specific learning needs such as vocabulary, form and function,
- reinforcement and repetition of language in context to develop language proficiency,
- specific literacy strategies to address phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, encoding, decoding and comprehension.

Specialized instruction

Time-specific specially-designed programming that addresses significant gaps in learning, literacy and English language proficiency through:





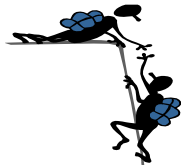
- small group and individual instruction
- working towards distinctive outcomes within the various programs of student (e.g., Early Development Centres, Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2)
- specialized programming for :
 - English Language Learners who also have medical, physical, cognitive, or behavioural programming requirements
- consideration of additional supports and services such as:
 - Counseling; Settlement services and support
 - OT/PT/SLP consultation and/or direct service
 - SLP and interpreter to assist with language assessments in L1
 - DLSA to support the family in the process of assessment



Supporting the Learner through Teams – SLT and MDT

The school learning team (SLT) consults and shares information relevant to the individual learner's education, and plans special education programming and services as required.

At the Early Learning level, this team usually consists of the classroom teacher, parents, resource teacher, and school administration. Members from different specialty areas, the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), may be represented (e.g., Early Learning Specialist and/ or Strategist, Speech and Language- SLP, Occupational Therapy -OT, Physiotherapy- PT, cultural Diversity and Learning Support Advisors - DLSA, Aboriginal Diversity and Learning Support Advisor, English Language Learning Specialist and /or ELL Strategist- ELL, etc.).

A brief introduction to involving teams School Learning Team (SLT) and Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)	
	The teacher has questions about how to help a learner.
	The teacher begins to investigate "Who is the learner?"
	<p>The teacher reviews the data with members of the SLT and they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ brainstorm and plan interventions and/ or ▪ invite members from other disciplines to help brainstorm and plan interventions (e.g. invite Early Learning Strategist or Specialist; invite English Language Learning Strategist or Specialist; invite SLP, OT, PT disciplines of the MDT)
	The teacher implements the interventions.
	The teacher monitors the learner's response to the intervention and responds accordingly.

Voice of the Teachers

These pages may be used to consider multiple perspectives throughout the School Learning Team (SLT) process. While it may not be possible or appropriate to include parents in every SLT, it is important to consider their viewpoint and gather their feedback throughout the process.

Step 1: Initial identification of an issue

"This learner seems to need additional support. I see he/she is having difficulty with...I can learn more about this learner and the challenges by connecting with the family."

Step 2: Gathering multiple sources of data (assessment)

"What do I know about this learner and this issue? How can I gather more information? Do I need to request the services of someone from the Early Learning Team?"

Step 3: Interpreting the data

"I have talked with this learner's parents and members of the support team about the situation; what it looks like at home and at school. I've considered the implications of this information. As the teacher, "I think this means I need to..."

Step 4: Brainstorming and planning an intervention

"I am going to make some changes in the classroom. I think this learner's needs to work on I can support this by altering my instruction and tasks to provide... The family can support the child by..."

Step 5: Implementing and monitoring the intervention

"We have a plan for what we will change, when, and how it will look at home and school. The learner's family understands the plan. We are all willing to try. I will monitor the child's response to the intervention at school by recording some observations. I will find out what the family notices, and we will consider what changes we'd each like to suggest."

Step 6: Planning the next steps

"I can talk with the learner's family to decide if we should continue this plan, change it, or move on to a new goal and a new plan. I can consult with the SLT to determine how we may proceed."

Voice of the Parent

This page may be used to consider what input or perspective a parent may have in the School Learning Team (SLT) process. Additionally, it may be used in a parent conference with an interpreter, Diversity and Learning Support Advisor (DLSA), or In-School Settlement Worker to explain how the parent and school can work together in the SLT.

Step 1: Initial identification of an issue

"The teacher and I need to talk. My child is having difficulty with... or The teacher feels my child is having difficulty with... What I think is..."

Step 2: Gathering multiple sources of data (assessment)

"I know my child, our family, our challenges and our successes. I know what has and has not worked at home. How can I share this information with the teacher?"

Step 3: Interpreting the data

"We have talked with the teacher about what the issue looks at home and at school. As the parent, I notice that my child...so I think this means that we need to...in order for my child to..."

Step 4: Brainstorming and planning an intervention

"We are going to change some things for my child. My child will.... The teacher will...this will help because... At home we can support by..."

Step 5: Implementing and monitoring the intervention

"We have a plan for what we will change, when, and how it will look at home and school. We understand it and are willing to try. We will let the teacher know how it is going, what questions we have, and what changes we would like to suggest."

Step 6: Planning the next steps

"My family has an important role in the SLT. We can talk with the teacher to decide if we should continue this plan, change it, or move on to a new goal and a new plan."

Voice of the Student


This page may be used to gather insight from the student's perspective around the identified issues. A more in-depth approach to working with young learner's perspectives can be found through Dr. Ross Greene's [Lives in the Balance](#) Problem Solving model.

Meet in a private enough space when the student is calm and alert. Consider saying, "This seems hard for you. What is going on? Can you draw a picture of what really is happening?"



What is going
on for me?

"And when things are better, what will they look like?
Can you draw a picture of what that looks like?
Can you add what helps?"



When it is better
and what helps.

Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Supports

Why teams?

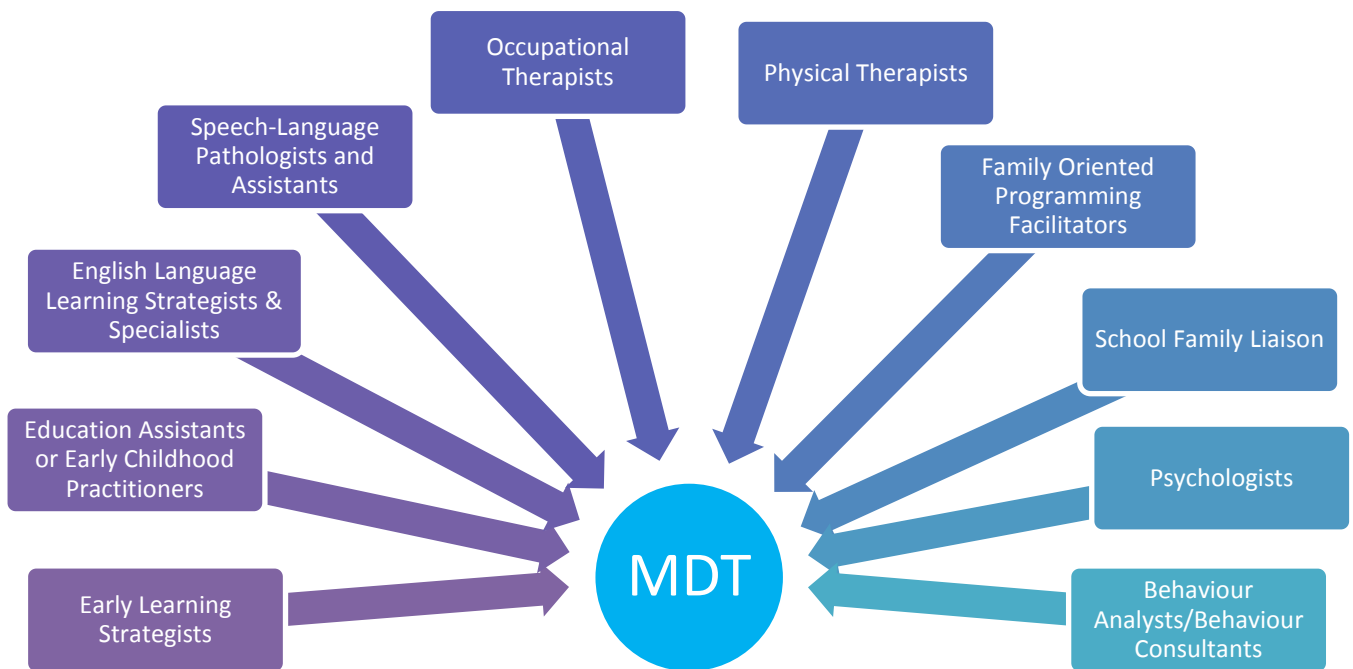
The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) provides an array of support and services within Kindergarten programs. Funding from Alberta Education, combined with services provided by the CBE, has enhanced the opportunities to access support, personnel and resources for Kindergarten children and teachers.

This model of support reflects the belief in the importance of the early years as a critical period of development in every child's learning journey. We recognize the importance of early intervention and personalizing learning for each child.

Who is on the MDT

The classroom teacher is at the centre of the child's Learning Team and is supported by the School Learning Team. In addition, based on classroom needs, each Kindergarten classroom may also be supported by members of the Multidisciplinary Team who work collaboratively with the teacher to best support early learning experiences.

The Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) consists of:



Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) supports can be accessed through your Area-based Early Learning Strategist.

What are MDT roles?

Role:	Focus area of classroom and learner support:
Early Learning Strategist	<p>Works within a CBE Area to collaborate with teachers and school learning teams to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ support programming for children with social-emotional needs ■ design instruction to meet an individual child's needs ■ interpret assessment information into teaching decisions ■ gather information about children ■ assist with transitions for children ■ access necessary supports and services ■ collaborate with other members of the Multidisciplinary Team
English Language Learning Strategist and ELL Specialist	<p>Works within a CBE Area and schools to collaborate with teachers and school learning teams to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ support English language development programming for ELLs ■ help differentiate between English Language learning needs and development and other complexities ■ support culturally responsive instruction ■ collaborate with other members of the Multidisciplinary Team
Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ help children to develop communication skills ■ provide information to parents about speech and language development ■ recommend hearing screenings
Speech-Language Assistant (SLA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ support children to develop communication skills ■ conduct hearing screenings

Occupational Therapist (OT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Collaborates with the teacher to support learner's: ■ fine motor skills such as pencil grasp, scissor skills, manipulation, eye-hand coordination, letter formation ■ focus and attention ■ organizational skills ■ self-care, independence and other life skills <p>OTs also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ attend to child-environment interaction: adaptive equipment (monitoring fit/use), accessibility, positioning, transfers, social interaction, transitioning ■ liaise with clinics/programs at the Alberta Children's Hospital ■ provide information to parents about physical development
Physiotherapist (PT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Collaborates with the teacher to help children develop: ■ strength and endurance ■ gross motor skills such as running, jumping, balance, hopping and climbing stairs ■ motor planning, coordination, and body awareness ■ classroom function such as posture, moving through space and personal space <p>PTs also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ work to integrate children into physical education classes and ensure playground accessibility & safety ■ liaise with clinics/programs at the Alberta Children's Hospital ■ provide information to parents about physical development
Education Assistant (EA)/ Early Childhood Practitioner (ECP)	<p>Works under the direction of the teacher and principal to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ support the teacher to meet the learning needs of children ■ implement strategies as directed by the teacher or other members of the MDT

Family Oriented Programming Facilitator (FOP)	<p>Supports Kindergarten families whose children are in half-day Kindergarten and receive Program Unit Funding (PUF) and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide opportunities for families to learn together through engaging sessions share information and strategies for developing: language and communication, speech sounds/articulation, building independence, early literacy, physical skills (fine and gross motor), early childhood development, behaviour/social emotional skills
School Family Liaison Worker (SFL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide connections for families to navigate the supports offered by the Calgary Board of Education link families to other community networks and supports liaise between family, school, strategist, and FOP facilitator
Psychologists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide psychological services on a referral basis that may include testing, assessment, diagnosis, consultation and intervention in accordance with professional standards and Alberta Education obtain informed consent and written consent from parent(s) to ensure understanding of psychological assessment and procedures provide guidance and recommendations to support and promote learner success
Behaviour Analyst/ Behaviour Consultants (BCBA/ BC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assist school staff in supporting children whose behaviours are interfering with their ability to access learning work collaboratively with school staff to ensure quality learning opportunities provide child-specific support to address significant behaviour concerns on a referral basis

Brainstorming Interventions for the Classroom

Use this form to design interventions for the young ELL who is encountering difficulties in the classroom.

Learner's name: _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____

School _____

Key challenge(s) for this learner	
Possible solutions	

Working with Families

Meeting with ELL Families

Before you begin

- **Remember, families need to know that they are** partners whose perceptions and experiences are valued by teachers.
- **Reflect upon the best way of communicating** this information. Is it best to meet in person? With a translator? With a member of the community as support?
- **Be sensitive** to your “position of authority.”
- **Build in more time** than you think might be necessary for the interaction, especially if there is an interpreter. Stay calm. Take enough time to start in a calm state and maintain a calm state.
- **Respect the resilience of the families.** Remember that the person in front of you is resilient, which may be masked by their limited English skills.
- **Frame the conversation** about the shared value of education. Tap into the family’s strengths around education (e.g., economic mobility, hope for the future).
- **Be explicit** about the reason for the meeting. Check the parent or caregiver’s perception of their role in schooling (e.g., come to meetings, support homework activities, ask questions).
- **Be clear about the student’s academic achievements** within the context of the student’s English language proficiency. Show exemplars.
- **Consider “switching heads”.** Imagine yourself in the same position in another country. What would help you?
- **Consider that the possibility that a child may have special needs. This may carry heavier stigmatization and alienation in other cultures.**

During the interaction

- **Speak slowly.** A slower rate of speech with pauses aids comprehension. Pitch of voice, rhythm, rate of speech, emphasis and emotions vary among cultures.
- **Simply language.** Keep your vocabulary and sentences direct and simple. If using an interpreter, pause every 8-10 seconds to allow for accurate interpretation. If using an interpreter, speak to the family member, not the interpreter.
- **Avoid** the use of metaphors, jargon, popular sayings or complicated terminology.
- **Use examples** to illustrate your point (such as work samples, photos, videos).
- **Allow extra wait time** for a response.
- **Use visuals** (diagrams, photographs, etc.) whenever possible. Link verbal and visual cues.

- **Write down** key information (points, details) and give the participants a copy.
- **Acknowledge and support** the other person's efforts to communicate.
- **Check for comprehension frequently.** Ask, "What did you understand me to say?" "Tell me, please, what I said." "What does that mean to you?"
- **Repeat** and paraphrase patiently.
- **Understand** that **smiling** can mean agreement or confusion or apprehension or politeness.
- **Understand** that silence can mean confusion or non-acceptance or disapproval or agreement.
- **Avoid** making assumptions about people and resist stereotyping.
- **Make sessions short** and concise. Communicating across languages is tiring.
- **Invite exchange of cross-cultural information.** Say "I am interested to know more about how you view this in your family." Ask "Who would you like to be part of this process?"; "What are the most important results you seek from me?"; "What do you think are the reasons for this?"; "Do you agree with the recommendations or the plan?"
(Insert Action Plan Resulting from School Learning Team Meeting).



This is a sample questionnaire to gather parent insights.
An interpreter might be needed to assist parents.

To help us understand your child:

1. Fill in the form below. Please print clearly.
2. Add any other information that may help the teacher.
3. Return this to your child's teacher. Your answers will be kept safe in your child's school file.

Child's Name			
Child's age (as of September 1)			
Handedness (circle one)	Right handed	Left handed	Not sure

General Information

1. Preschool Experience
a. What pre-school experience has your child had? Please describe the program (e.g., nursery school, pre-school / playschool, daycare, kindergarten).
b. What did your child enjoy doing?
c. What did your child not enjoy?
2. List your child's special interests.
3. List your child's strengths.
4. List your child's fears.
5. Does your child enjoy story times with you? What is your child's favourite book?
6. Does your child have computer / internet access at home?
7. List all people who live in the home. Please write the names and ages of brothers and sisters.
8. Does your child go to a daycare or babysitter regularly? If yes, please provide their name and phone number.
9. Does your child have any special friends at school? Who?

10. What does your child expect from this school experience (e.g., Early Development Centre, Kindergarten, etc.)?
11. What do you expect for your child from this school experience (e.g., Early Development Centre, Kindergarten, etc.)?

Health

1. Does your child have a chronic health condition? Circle one.	Yes	No	If yes, please describe.
If yes, how might this condition impact your child at school?			
2. Does your child have allergies? To what?			
3. Is your child taking medication regularly? Circle one.	Yes	No	If yes, please explain, what medication and why.
4. Has your child been tested for:			
a. Eye problems	Yes	No	
b. Speech or language problems	Yes	No	
c. Ear or hearing problems	Yes	No	
d. Motor or muscle problems	Yes	No	
Please describe the concern(s)			
5. Are there any concerns or situations that the teacher needs to be aware of which may affect your child's behaviour over the school year?			
6. Has your child had any significant or important experiences which the teacher needs to be aware of? (Examples: new baby, death or separation in the family, fear of water, hospitalization, head injury, fire, member of the family with a disability).			

Home Language Inventory

What is/are the home language(s)?					
What language does each of these people speak with your child?	only a home language	mostly a home language	both English and a home language (equally)	mostly English	only English
Mother					
Father					
Older sibling(s)					
Younger sibling(s)					
Grandparent(s)					
Caregiver(s)					
Other _____					
adapted from P.O. Tabor (2008). One Child, Two Languages.					



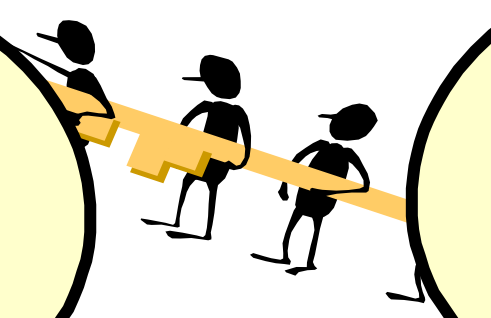
This sheet helps parents and interpreters keep notes and remember what to do after a school meeting.

Child's Name		Date:
Name of person filling out this form:		
Relationship to child:		
Name of teacher or staff member the family may contact:		
Role	Phone number	Best time to contact:

Thank you for coming to this meeting. Today we met to talk about your child.

1. Please take your child:	
<input type="checkbox"/> To a medical doctor. Please have the doctor to look at: because:	
<input type="checkbox"/> To an eye doctor	
<input type="checkbox"/> For a hearing test	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
2. Please bring these things (or a copy) to the school:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child's birth certificate	
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child's Alberta Health Care number	
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship and Immigration papers	
<input type="checkbox"/> Report cards from previous schools	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
3. Today we talked about your child's:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical health	<input type="checkbox"/> Social skills (e.g. friendships)
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental health and/or traumatic experiences	<input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting to life in Canada
<input type="checkbox"/> Clothing, housing, food, sleep	<input type="checkbox"/> Beginning English for interpersonal communication
<input type="checkbox"/> Upcoming or recent changes at home	<input type="checkbox"/> Academic English
<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling safe at home and school	<input type="checkbox"/> Behaviour at home and school
<input type="checkbox"/> Time with adult supervision	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning concerns
<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional needs (e.g. confidence, self-worth)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
The school is going to:	At home you are going to:
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Suggestions for Working with Interpreters



Schedule extra time to meet, make eye contact with the parent as well as the interpreter. Speak evenly, not too slowly or loudly.

Translations must be true to the original message. Therefore, to ensure accuracy, you must pause every 8-10 seconds or 18-20 words.

The interpreter and school personnel must remain in the room for the entire meeting. It is unethical to continue the meeting without all parties present.

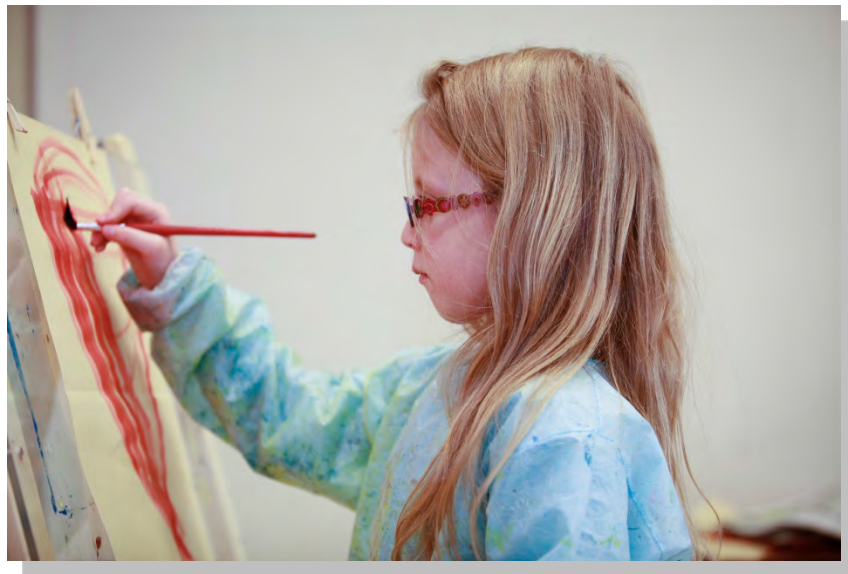
Explain key components of lengthy or complex documents to the parent. The interpreter will translate and facilitate questions and answers between both parties.

Resources

Glossary

- **CLD: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse.** This refers to learners who have culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. This acknowledges the roles of culture and language in learner learning, and on performance. Notably **First Nations, Inuit and Metis** learners may have English as a second language, as well as culturally diverse backgrounds. Many of the strategies to support the acquisition of academic English are applicable to this group of learners.
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** recognizes and builds on the values of the language, culture and experiences of each student (Dutro and Helman, 2012, p. 46). Diversity is the wide range of uniqueness in humanity. There are many theoretical frameworks for understanding socio-linguistic-cultural responsiveness at a policy, program, and personal level. Cultural responsiveness is a critical set of skills and knowledge educators must acquire to effectively serve English Language Learners (ELLs). Strategies to build cultural responsiveness generally begin with a willingness to learn from those within the other culture.
- **Differentiation and Personalization of Instruction:** Differentiation takes into consideration the profile of the learner, a deep understanding of content, an ability to modify process, and the expansion of opportunities to represent learning through products. Explicit language teaching can occur within this inclusionary model utilizing a thorough understanding of language acquisition elements and a dedication to this concept during planning, assessment, and instruction. Personalization attends to what engages each particular learner.
- **EAL: English as an Additional Language.** This adjective and acronym is increasingly used to [describe the process of language acquisition](#) which acknowledges more than two languages.
- **ELD: English Language Development.** This refers to a systematic approach to English Language Learning. Learners who are ELLs require ELD to gain strong proficiency in English, particularly academic English. ELD includes the foundational principles of explicit language instruction- Functions, Forms, and Vocabulary- as well as the application of these concepts to different stages of language learning: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced. [Susana Dutro's Systematic English Language Development](#) and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) models are influential in CBE's professional learning for teachers.

- **ELLs: English Language Learners.** This term is used by [Alberta Education](#) and the [Calgary Board of Education](#) in their discourse and documents regarding English as a Second Language. In Calgary more than half of the ELLs entering Kindergarten were born in Canada. Approximately 1 in 4 learners are ELLs. By 2020, it is estimated that 1 in 3 learners in CBE will be ELLs.
- **ESL: English as a Second Language.** This adjective is often attached to the program, or the task, of learning English as an additional language. Once used to describe learners, this term has been replaced by “ELL”.
- **Explicit Language Instruction:** Explicit learning is a “conscious awareness and intention” to learn. It is focused, intentional, deliberate, and planned instruction for English language learning. It can take place in a universal, targeted, or individualized learning environment. The major components of explicit language instruction are: **Functions of Language, Forms of Language, and Vocabulary.** And includes regular opportunities for fluency.
- **L1:** This typically refers to the learner’s home language, also known as the heritage or home language.
- **L2:** this typically refers to English, even though this may be the learner’s third, fourth, etc., language.
- **LP1-LP5:** These describe five levels of acquiring language across Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing “strands”. Degrees of English Language Proficiency Level are sometimes abbreviated as: LP1, LP2, LP3, LP4, and LP5. Sometimes these levels are referred to as Benchmarks 1-5.



Acknowledgements

We thank the many contributors to this document for their time and effort:

CBE English Language Learner Team

CBE Early Learning Team

CBE Psychologists

(Early Learning, English Language Learning, Aboriginal, Gifted)

CBE Speech-Language Team

CBE Aboriginal Team

CBE Kindergarten Teachers

CBE Early Development Centre (EDC) Teacher

CBE Pilot Schools:

- Bridlewood School,
- Cecil Swanson School,
- Connaught School,
- Coventry Hills School,
- Olympic Heights School,
- Saddle Ridge School and
- CBE Early Development Centres.

Key Resources and Links

Alberta Education

ESL K-9 Guide to Implementation

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/563809/esl-guide-to-implementation-k-9.pdf>

ESL Proficiency Benchmarks

<http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/>

Our Words, Our Ways; Teaching First Nations, Metis and Inuit Learners

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/563982/our-words-our-ways.pdf>

Working with Young Children Who Are Learning English as a New Language

<http://www.education.alberta.ca/media/1093791/earlylearning.pdf>

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learning | **as unique** | as every student