

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## Does exposure to more than one language cause a language disorder?

- o If a child has a developmental language disorder (DLD), then the issue lies in their ability to process linguistic signals at a level typical of their age group. Exposure to more than one language does not cause or exacerbate a DLD. (2)

## What are some signs that an ELL has a language disorder as opposed to a language difference so that I can refer them to a speech-language pathologist (SLP)?

- A child who experiences challenges in their native language as well as another language (including the language of instruction) may have a DLD. Interview the parents and review the student's file for notes from previous teachers to investigate their risk of having a DLD.
- Observe the child's behaviour: if the child often plays alone, this can be due to shyness, but may also suggest a disorder (2).

## My student does not speak in class but their mother says they speak their native language at home. What is going on?

- Newcomer ELLs may experience a "silent period," where the child is adjusting to the new language environment and building their vocabulary without using the language of instruction. This can last from a few days to six months.
- If the child is not responding to the adapted program and you are concerned, contact the school support system so that a psychologist and SLP can investigate if another issue is at play (3).

**EVERY TEACHER HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DEEPLY IMPACT AN ELL'S LIFE FOR THE BETTER. A SMALL EFFORT TO INTEGRATE AN ELL'S NATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM CAN GO A LONG WAY IN BUILDING THEIR LANGUAGE SKILLS! (2)**



## REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

1. Ontario. Ministry of Education. (2008). Supporting English Language Learners: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators, Grades 1 to 8. Ministry of Education.
2. Adger, C. T., Snow, C. E., & Christian, D. (Eds.). (2018). What teachers need to know about language (Vol. 2). Multilingual Matters.
3. Mercier, M. A Resource and Informational Toolkit for Speech-Language Pathologists Working with Bilingual Children.

# SUPPORTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS



STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS ON HOW TO BRING THE BEST OUT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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# QUICK FACTS

Teachers show students how to reach their full potential in many brilliant ways. A teacher with information on how to support English language learners (ELLs) can make more informed decisions on how to best support them.

- **English language learners (ELLs)** are students who are learning English, the language of instruction, simultaneously as they are learning the curriculum content (1).
- **Teachers may observe the following characteristics in ELLs:**
  - poor communication skills in English
  - a foreign accent in English or difficulty in articulation
  - limited English vocabulary size
  - delay in gaining knowledge
  - appearing uninterested in communication and joint activities
  - slow response time
  - lack of nonverbal communication (such as gestures) (2).

**Rather than viewing ELLs as having challenges in school, it can be helpful to view them as students who bring unique perspectives and language resources to the classroom (2). Also, many studies have supported a "bilingual advantage," including greater mental flexibility and problem-solving skills (1).**

Read on for strategies on how to bring the best out of your ELL students!

# STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT ELLS (1)



## Classroom Organization

- Model the correct pronunciation of the student's name and practise it
- Involve all students in brainstorming activities to make the the class more welcoming
- Assign ELLs roles in the classroom, such as distributing classroom materials, to assist with socialization and orientation
- Label objects in the classroom in English and the ELL's native language
- Assign peer buddies/mentors to support the ELL's participation in class

## Instructional Strategies

- Assist ELLs in creating a bilingual dictionary by using picture dictionaries and cards
- Encourage the ELL to use their native language in journalling, word lists, and preparing drafts
- Ensure the ELL can navigate the school by leading the class on a tour of the school, writing a collaborative language-experience story with the students about it, and then asking the ELL to copy it and practise reading it aloud to a peer
- Adapt lessons to the level of the ELL's English proficiency

## Explicit Language-Teaching Strategies

- Teach the ELL the English for important information (such as their address) and key everyday phrases such as "Where is...?" using pictures and actions
- Use musical chants to reinforce everyday expressions
- Explicitly teach the Roman alphabet
- Seek help from bilingual peers and vounteers to clarify instructions if possible
- Ask the ELL to match vocabulary to pictures
- Simplify sentence structures

## Ongoing Strategies

- Provide feedback on one error type at a time. Note patterns of errors and address them at a later time.
- Provide opportunities for ELLs to share their language and culture with peers
- Design all lessons to include an aspect that reinforces prior knowledge
- Ask the ELL to rephrase instructions in their own words
- Point out different uses of the same word in different contexts/subjects

### STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE:

- **ENCOURAGE ELLS TO SPEAK WITH PEERS WHO ARE PROFICIENT IN ENGLISH (1)**
- **ENCOURAGE NATIVE LANGUAGE-USE AND LITERACY AT HOME BECAUSE IT SUPPORTS OVERALL LANGUAGE SKILLS IN BOTH LANGUAGES (2)**
- **INTEGRATE NATIVE LANGUAGE SUPPORTS IN THE CLASSROOM (2)**

