

Kindergarten-aged ELLs use the following strategies as they learn English:

- using their first language;
- not speaking (silent period);
- using headlines and learned phrases;
- producing more complex structures and vocabulary.

Strategies To Support The Transition To School

- Practise the pronunciation of children's names.
- Learn a few words in the children's first language.
- Provide a little time and a safe space for children to be on their own as it sometimes helps them absorb their new environment.
- Allow the ELL to bring a favourite object from home; it can often be reassuring.
- Outside the classroom door, place a picture of a clock to show entry and dismissal times.
- Create a welcoming environment, with the flexibility that allows parents to stay for a while if they can. Allowing parents to stay a little longer with their children often helps the children (and parents) feel more at ease. Teachers use their professional judgment about when to suggest this, and for how long.

Supporting And Encouraging First Language Use

- Incorporate the children's first language by learning how to say some greetings.
- Include the first languages of the children in environmental classroom print (e.g., Hello and Welcome signs, names).
- Give ELLs opportunities to teach some words from their first language to the class (e.g., book, blocks, cookie).
- Invite ELLs to work and play with same-language partners from time to time (e.g., while reading or working on the computer).
- Invite older siblings or students who speak the child's first language into the classroom and observe them interacting. It is an opportunity to hear the child using his/her most familiar form of communication. The older child could translate, when necessary. It is important to continue this interaction after the child begins to use English.
- Include calendars that reflect the cultures and languages of the ELLs, where possible.
- Embed the diversity in the classroom and in the broader community in learning centres (e.g., boxes and cans in the home centre, environmental print, flyers, newspapers, fabric, cooking utensils).
- Accept and honour children's early writing efforts that are in a first language.
- Include books written in the languages of the ELLs.
- Play children's songs in their first languages.
- Invite resource people (e.g., Elders, co-op students, ECE students, pre-service teacher candidates) who speak languages represented in the community to participate in the daily life of the classroom or be part of special events (e.g., as guest readers or storytellers, on field trips, during cooking experiences).
- Include information technology (e.g., provide electronic stories in the children's first language, have a parent record a story for the listening centre).

Supporting Oral Development:

Using first language/Silent period

Teachers can ...

- speak and use physical gestures (e.g., The teacher can point to his coat and say, My coat. Show me your coat. The ELL points to her coat.).

Using headlines and learned phrases

Teachers can ...

- present choices and include physical gestures (e.g., The teacher asks, Can you point to your name? as she points to the name board.);
- scaffold the responses (e.g., Yes, that is your name. Can you show me a name that starts like your name?).

Using more complex language

Teachers can ...

- acknowledge what children are doing and, therefore, help sustain interest (e.g., I see that you lined up your cars in a row.);
- support children as they work through a process (e.g., I see you found a way to get the car all the way down the ramp.);
- reaffirm vocabulary that children use (e.g., You're right. The blue car is faster than the red car.);
- introduce new vocabulary informally (e.g., Look at how far the blue car travels.);
- ask for clarification, elaboration, or justification (e.g., What do you think will happen if you change the ramp?);
- challenge children's thinking with questions (e.g., How did you know? Why did you decide ...?);
- prompt children to retell in different ways (label, identify, describe, summarize) (e.g., Tell me how you made the ramp higher. Tell me why you did this.);
- guide children to make connections (compare, contrast, apply) (e.g., That's the same as ... What does this make you think of ...?);
- lead children to reflect on experiences – encourage questioning, further wonderings, and inference (e.g., I wonder what would happen if ... I wonder why ... What else could you try? I wonder what you could try next ...).

WRITING STRATEGIES:

Interactive Writing

In this supportive instructional strategy, the teacher uses enlarged text to make the strategies writers use highly visible to the children. During shared writing, children: compose a message with the teacher while the teacher transcribes the ideas; learn that talk can be written down; learn aspects of the writing process; see how thoughts and ideas are composed into writing.

During Interactive Writing, Children:

- “share the pen” and together compose the writing;
- experience a variety of materials (e.g., whiteboards, magnetic letters, white tape, coloured markers);
- learn to consider audience and make meaning of text;
- are given a real reason to write;
- make predictions (e.g., they look at a picture and compose a story about it);
- see themselves as writers;
- learn how to use other resources to help them write (e.g., alphabet board, word wall, signs, labels);
- explore the way letters and words work;
- develop phonemic awareness (stretch the word);
- engage in further practice of high-frequency words

MODELLED WRITING

In this highly supportive instructional strategy, the teacher models the writing process. The experience is surrounded with talk.

During Modelled Writing, Children:

- hear think alouds about the decisions writers make;
- experience writing for different (real) purposes and audiences;
- learn that talk can be written down;
- learn aspects of the writing process;
- see how thoughts and ideas are composed into writing;
- experience the reciprocal nature of reading and writing.

Independent Writing

Using this instructional strategy, the teacher releases the responsibility of writing to the children so that they can practise and apply what they have learned and attempt new skills and strategies.

During Independent Writing, Children:

- work with the teacher as he or she assesses their learning;
- see the teacher demonstrate, support, and encourage all stages of writing,
- from the scribble stage to simple pieces of writing;
- write for different purposes (e.g., draw labels for pictures, signs, grocery lists);
- feel like writers;
- write in different contexts (e.g., learning centres, in small groups);
- learn to use classroom materials as resources (e.g., environmental print, word walls, frequently used words, alphabet friezes/borders);
- use a variety of writing materials (e.g., markers, whiteboards, crayons, pencils, magnetic letters, a variety of paper).

READING STRATEGIES:

Read-aloud

In this highly supportive instructional strategy, the teacher carefully chooses a text that matches the receptive language capabilities of a small group of children, then models the reading. This allows more focused and personalized opportunities for ELLs to engage with text.

During Read-aloud, The Children:

- hear and enjoy the rhythms and sounds of language (in this case English);
- become part of a “reading community”;
- are introduced to new vocabulary in the context of meaningful text;
- gain experience with a variety of genres;
- build a repertoire of familiar texts which they will want to revisit;
- hear the teacher model book language;
- have the opportunity to connect prior knowledge and experiences in order to
- develop new knowledge and understanding;
- focus on reading for meaning.

Shared Reading

In this supportive instructional strategy, the teacher uses enlarged text to make the strategies that proficient readers use highly visible to the children.

During Shared Reading, The Children:

- learn through the teacher thinking aloud, modelling, and demonstrating that
- we read to understand;
- learn, using cloze (covering words or individual letters), how to use the
- strategies of predicting and confirming, applying letter/sound knowledge, and
- understanding grammatical structure of pattern and text;
- develop phonemic awareness in the context of whole texts;
- use features/concepts of print in the language of instruction;
- build vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary;
- hear and rehearse phrased, fluent, and expressive reading;
- produce language in the safety of the group.
- Note: It is important to provide small-group shared reading opportunities for all
- children to reinforce and practise the above skills and strategies.

Guided Reading

Guided reading provides children opportunities to rehearse and practise what they have learned and try out new strategies with minimal support. Because guided reading involves students reading a text with a minimal amount of teacher support, a decision about whether to use guided reading should be based on the learning behaviours, strengths, and needs of individual students. When students are able to demonstrate an understanding of print concepts and knowledge of letters and sounds, and can recognize some sight words, they are ready to participate in guided reading groups. Therefore, guided reading may not be appropriate for emergent readers who are still developing these skills. Emergent readers require group shared-reading opportunities where they can learn reading strategies in context.

Independent Reading

Independent reading provides children with opportunities to rehearse and practise what they have learned and to try out new strategies.

During Independent Reading, Children:

- practise the strategies they have learned in shared reading and heard in read-aloud;
- develop preferences for topics they like to read about;
- choose from different genres of books;
- are not restricted to a book: they can read “around the room,” familiar charts, and poems;
- read and reread materials they are familiar with, that hold their interest, and that reflect their interests;
- self-select texts that are interesting to them even if they cannot read them independently (e.g., a book from a read-aloud, a book from the science table, an atlas, a map);
- have bins of material that are at their independent reading level.

ASSESSMENT

Of the six areas of learning in The Kindergarten Program – Personal and Social Development, Language, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Health and Physical Activity, and the Arts – it may seem that the Language expectations should be the main focus for ELLs. However, ELLs often show greater progress in their English-language development as a result of engaging in tasks in another area of learning (e.g., solving a math problem, taking part in a science inquiry, participating in a physical activity, or creating a collage).

The Kindergarten Program lists the strategies to be used in assessing progress of all children as Observation, Listening, and Asking Probing Questions. When ELLs are at the early stages of acquiring English, asking probing questions may be unproductive. Initially, observation will be the most useful strategy to use, but the other two strategies will come into play as the children's understanding and production of more complex English increases.

Some Suggestions For Assessing ELLs' Learning If They Can't Tell You What They Know

Personal and social development

Observe ELLs:

- in large and small groups, at learning centres, during routines, and while
- interacting with others;
- using materials to show what they know and can do;
- trying new things;
- taking turns.

Language

Observe:

- where ELLs start to read in a book;
- if ELLs model the rhythm of language after hearing read-alouds;
- if ELLs point to words of familiar poems during shared reading;
- writing samples (e.g., names, signs, lists);
- vocabulary recognition (e.g., pointing to letters and words);
- making names with magnetic letters or other classroom materials;
- if ELLs take books home;
- how ELLs interact with computer software.

Health and Physical Activity

Observe how:

- small and large muscles, spatial sense, and balance are developing as the
- ELLs play games or participate in activities outside or in the gym;
- the ELLs use equipment (e.g., climbing apparatus, balls, sand tools).

The Arts

Observe:

- how ELLs use materials;
- the choices that ELLs make in their artwork (e.g., Do they mix colours? Do they use different textures?);
- ELLs during music activities, since children who are silent in other contexts
- often participate in songs and chants;
- how ELLs follow actions even when they don't understand the words.

Mathematics

Observe ELLs:

- sorting, patterning, placing;
- placing objects in groups;
- pointing to what comes next while the teacher is modelling a more complex pattern;
- adding or taking away objects in a set;
- voting on a class graph;
- using different counting strategies (e.g., tagging objects, counting in their first language, putting one place setting for each person in the home centre);
- building with pattern blocks and geometric shapes, watching to see if they are learning about the blocks' and shapes' attributes (e.g., Are they using shapes to create a stable base?);
- making decisions about the materials (e.g., putting more sand in a scoop;
- adding more blocks or taking away blocks to make a structure more stable).

Science and Technology

Observe ELLs:

- demonstrating what they observe (e.g., pointing to objects during a class walk,
- putting their hands under objects to test if they are floating or sinking);
- beginning to use contextualized language, such as, It do this or Look.

Examples of assessment informing instruction

1. Differentiating instruction for a child who is in the silent period

Observations Notes	Analysis of Notes Gathered over Two Weeks	Differentiating Instruction
<p>January 20 Large Group - Shared Reading</p> <p>Huong pointed to bugs in illustrations after my invitation</p>	<p>Huong smiles, nods, and points during large-group activities.</p>	<p>Huong is demonstrating a willingness to participate in group activities, so to build his vocabulary, the teacher decides to engage him in a small group to hear more stories, poems, and songs that are repetitive in nature. He will encourage Huong to participate in the security of the small group.</p> <p>The teacher will use a dual-language book to support Huong's first-language development. Huong will be able to take the book home and read with his family.</p>
<p>February 4 At sand table - <i>I want truck</i></p> <p>February 5 At snack table - <i>I want that</i> - points to banana</p>	<p>Huong is beginning to communicate in short sentences, usually when he wants his needs met.</p>	<p>When Huong asks for something he needs, the teacher extends Huong's learning by asking him questions that he can successfully answer and by moving him toward using learned phrases.</p>

How many letters are in your name?

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

How many letters are in your name?

6, 7, 8, 9, 10

The activity is open ended with minimal language demands, maximizing success for ELLs. This particular challenge provides multiple opportunities for the teacher to observe the children demonstrating what they know and can do. The teacher uses an at-a-glance sheet to record the observations.

Observation Notes

Jordan called out J,o,r,d,a,n and signed his name in the right column (*using more complex language structures*).

Jordan demonstrated for the children how to count to ten in his first language.

Albert, Kofi, Zenobia, and Claudia found their name cards and tagged each letter as they counted (*using learned phrases*).

Manuel put one finger up at a time for a total of six (*silent period*).

Differentiating Instruction

Having previously introduced five and ten frames, the teacher modelled an example of how to make a child's name in the frame. She invited Jordan to make his name in a ten frame.

J	o	r	D	A
N				

The teacher planned to add the classmade five and ten frames to the mathematics centre.

She invited Jordan to teach the class how to count to 10 in his first language.

She planned to talk with Albert, Kofi, Zenobia, and Claudia about the counting strategy they used. She made a note to observe these four children at the learning centres to listen, look for, and document other counting strategies they are using.

She observed Manuel in another context.