

An Introduction to Supporting English Language Learners in Ontario Schools

Narrator:

- Slide 1 An Introduction to supporting English language learners in Ontario Schools.
- Slide 2 The information in this PowerPoint has been specifically designed to provide educators with information regarding supporting English language learners.
- Slide 3 As we begin today I would like to acknowledge the land that I am on here in Toronto where I am recording this learning session. I would like to acknowledge and express gratitude to the Mississauga's of the Credit First Nation of the Anishinabek Peoples who continue to share their ancestral lands with us. I would invite you where ever you are to consider and acknowledge the land that you are on as you view this learning session.
- Slide 4 In Ontario we have a renewed vision for education and our four goals of "Achieving Excellence", "Ensuring Equity", "Promoting Well-Being", and "Enhancing Public Confidence", will all be supported in this learning session.
- Slide 5 We hope that this session will give participants the opportunity to develop a common understanding of some of the terms and language that we use when supporting our English language learners.
We will also be exploring the difference between BICS and CALP. BICS is an acronym that stands for "Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills" and CALP stands for "Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency".
We will be taking a look at these two concepts a little later in our presentation, and we will explore how they impact students' learning.
We will also have an opportunity to explore some of the resources that support English language learners, including the STEP resource.
- Slide 6 Here on the screen in front of you, you see our "Vision of the English language learner". This "Vision of the English language learner" reflects the conditions that we believe will support all of our students to achieve excellence. We know that with our support our students will be able to benefit from these six principles or tenants.
We know that they can learn English at the same time as they learn the Ontario curriculum.
We work to ensure that they see themselves in the learning environment.
We also know that our English language learners need to feel that their

culture and language are valued. As educators we have a role in ensuring our classrooms and schools reflect the cultures of our students. We will create the circumstances to help them build the confidence to express their opinions and know that they have a voice. We know that our students are capable of high expectations when they're involved in setting goals. And of course, we will create opportunities for students to select a pathway that best meets their goals.

Slide 7 In Ontario we define an English language learner as a student who speaks a language other than English or a variety of English that is different from the English that we use in the classrooms of Ontario. We also acknowledge in our definition that the students will require support in learning English.

Slide 8 There are some definitions that I want to talk about briefly so that we all have the same understanding of these terms.
"ELL - an English language learner": An English language learner is a person.
"ESL" stands for "English as a Second Language", and English as a Second Language is a program or a credit course that a student would take in high school, or they are the particular supports that an elementary student would require.
An example of this is the difference between a subject and a person. We wouldn't say "He is a biology," we would say "He is a student that takes biology." So we don't say "He is an ESL" we can say "He is an English language learner taking an ESL course"
"English Literacy Development", "ELD", is also a course or a program that a high school student can take for credit, and, it also speaks to a specific support that students, who have a significant gap in their education, or limited prior schooling require.
You may also come across this term "L1". And L1 is an acronym for first language. You may see this term in articles regarding support for English language learners.

Slide 9 English language learners can be broken down into two major groups. Here in Ontario we have our Canadian-born English language learners, and then we also have our English language learners who are our newcomers who have come to Ontario from other countries.

Slide 10 When we think of our Canadian-born English language learners, these are our children that are born here in Canada, and when they start or enter into our school system, English is not the language that they speak. They have learned another language as their first language. And we have three different groups that make up this population of Canadian-born English language learners.

We have our students from our Indigenous communities, First Nations, Metis, and Inuit.

Some of these students may be entering our systems in kindergarten, or they may be coming in at different points throughout their educational career. They may go to a school for their elementary education in a federally funded community school where the language of instruction is in their native language, and they enter into the provincially-funded schools at the secondary level.

Our next group of students, the group in the middle box on your screen they are our Canadian-born students raised in immigrant communities. Their family speaks a first language that is a language other than English and in the home that is the language that they speak. Perhaps there are grandparents present in the home, and they also speak that language.

So our four-year-old child is growing up in an environment where they're speaking their first language and it isn't until they come to school that they are really hearing English on a fulltime basis. Now these children may well be living in a community where they are exposed to English when they go to the grocery store or they hear English at the park and perhaps they are watching some English language TV. But for the most part their language of communication is a language other than English.

Then we have our third group, these are our children that are born into communities that have maintained a very distinct and culturally linguistic tradition. These children grow up in a community where everything around them, all of their supports are in their first language; their faith community meets and worships in their first language, the car salesman speaks first language, everyone in their community speaks the same language and with satellite TV any television they are watching is also in their first language.

In this scenario the first time these children hear English may well be when they start junior kindergarten and their kindergarten teacher speaks to them in English.

So here we have three very distinct groups of Canadian born English language learners each with a very different set of needs.

Slide 11 We also have our newcomers, and this is the group we more commonly think of when we think of English language learners. Our newcomers come from other countries, and often they have come for very different reasons.

We have one group, you can see on the left hand side, "Voluntary Planned Immigration Process". These families have decided that they wanted to immigrate to Canada. They have gone through the process, they have applied, they have arrived here in Ontario, and now they are attending an Ontario school.

We have to remember that wherever they have come from, they have been attending school in their home country; they have been attaining

age-appropriate literacy and numeracy skills in their first language, so they know how to read for the main idea or how to write a summary, they just don't know how to do it in English. That is a set of skills that this group of students comes with and we need to be very aware of these skills.

Our group of students in the middle box on your screen. This group of students have left their home country due to some sort of crisis or conditions of extreme urgency.

This group often makes up our population of English language learners with a refugee background. They may have been on the move for a long period of time or living in a refugee camp or they have been moving from country to country, trying to seek a country to receive them. This group of students in particular may well have large gaps in their learning. For some reason, they have not been able to go to school, whether attending school was dangerous, or perhaps it was unavailable to them. So these students may come to us with large gaps in their education, and they often require what we call an English Literacy Development program.

Our third group of students are our "International or Visa Students".

These are students whose families have chosen for them to attend school in Ontario and are paying a fee for them to register and attend our publically funded Ontario schools. We need to be aware of this group of students because once they are here and they have paid their fees they are entitled to all the same programs and services that any other student receives.

We also need to be aware that students from this group may be in very different home situations. Sometimes, if the student is old enough, they may well be living on their own in an apartment. Not only are they responsible for their own schooling, they are also responsible for their own daily care, cooking their meals, buying the groceries and everything that goes with living independently.

In some scenarios the students may be staying in a home-stay situation, or perhaps with extended family of relatives. And in the case of our younger international or visa students, One parent might be here with the children and the other is still living and working in their home country, so now we have a family that is living apart.

So you can see from these six different types of English language learners that we've looked at, both our Canadian-born and our newcomers, each group comes with a very specific set of considerations.

Slide 12 I mentioned earlier that we would be talking about the language acquisition process and BICS and CALP. BICS which I said stands for basic interpersonal communication skills. BICS is that social language. It's the language of the here and now. It's the familiar. It's the ability to talk about the things that are personally relevant and connected to you or to have the receptive language skills to understand those things that represent your here and now. Your personal

needs such as: I am hungry, I am cold, it is the ability to learn the routines of the classroom, understanding where the pencil sharpener is and how to use it, here's what we do.

It's that social language, the language of the playground. It's the first language that people learn and develop.

It typically takes a year or two to develop BICS. We actually say it takes between 5 to 7 years to become truly proficient in a second language. So those first couple years, students are developing that BICS type of language, the social language of communication.

Then we talk about CALP, cognitive academic language proficiency, this is the language of education. This is the language of our textbooks. Take a look at that first nugget and the words "adjacent", "passive", "alternative", "criterion", "obtain", "formulate", "crucial", and "generate". All of those words come from our Ontario curriculum (elementary curriculum). These are words that we expect all of our elementary students to learn and to know.

And we can see that those words have an academic nature. You wouldn't use them in casual conversation or in a social situation. They are really words that we use in a formal academic setting.

Then we also have metaphors and similes; the slide shows several examples.

Then we get into those really big concepts that require a lot of language to describe: "Concepts of emotion, justice, freedom, revolution".

Understanding those concepts requires a sophisticated vocabulary and language to articulate them.

And of course we know we are always reading our environment and making sense of our surrounding and it is that CALP language that allows us to articulate, what we see and experience in our environment.

Academic language is very concise, it's precise, and it's authoritative, and it becomes more complex as a student progresses from grade to grade.

Slide 13 Dr. Jim Cummins from OISE/U of T was the person who coined the terms BICS and CALP and did much of the initial work in this field. On the EduGAINS website there is a brief 10-minute video of Dr. Jim Cummins explaining BICS and CALP in far more detail. We strongly suggest that you view this video to have a deeper understanding of BICs and CALP. The web link is on this slide. You may wish to view this after this Adobe Connect session.

Slide 14 When we think about our academic vocabulary or that world of CALP language we know we have general academic words that are low frequency in everyday language but they're useful in a wide variety of curriculum areas. You can see some examples on the screen: "observe", "observation", "observer". Then we also have low frequency words which are important but they tend to be more specific to one particular subject area, such as

mineral or microscope in a science class.

Slide 15 We have a policy to support English language learners. It's called *English language learners ESL and ELD Programs and Services, Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12*. It was written in 2007 and since 2007 school boards across Ontario have been implementing and putting into practice the various requirements of the policy.

On the screen now you have a policy statement about initial assessment. And it talks about a board's requirement to do an initial assessment on all English language learners to determine their English proficiency. This initial assessment consists of a structured interview to assess oral language skills; it must also assess reading comprehension, and writing, along with an assessment of mathematical knowledge and skills.

Slide 16 And the policy also states that all school boards will have a procedure for ensuring the ongoing assessment of English language acquisition and the school district has a way to track the development of English language proficiency.

The policy goes on to state that once a year that information on the English language learners' English language proficiency should be summarized and stored in the Ontario Student Record or OSR.

Slide 17 To support boards in the on-going assessment of an English language learner's language proficiency, a resource was created and the resource is called "STEP: Steps to English Proficiency", and what you can see on the screen is the timeline for its development. STEP began in 2006, and there have been many studies and input from teachers across Ontario, a very large three-year pilot from 2007-2009 was conducted; STEP was revised based on the input from that large pilot project.

Slide 18 More field tests took place and revisions were made along the way and we now have The STEP resource posted on the EduGAINS web site both a STEP continua that support students in English as a Second Language programs which we call the OLBs (observable language behaviour continua) and then we also have STEP continua that supports our students that require English Literacy Development and their continua are called OLLBs (observable language and literacy behaviours).

Slide 19 What is STEP? Well, STEP is an acronym for Steps to English Proficiency, and STEP is a framework for assessing and monitoring English language learners' English language acquisition and their literacy development across the Ontario curriculum. This is an electronic resource. You can always access it on EduGAINS and it has been designed for the use of both ESL/ELD teachers and classroom teachers.

- Slide 20 This is a comparison chart of what STEP is and what STEP is not. STEP is a resource and it's been designed very specifically to support the English language learner policy. STEP also directly aligns with the Ontario curriculum. It also supports what we know about language acquisition and literacy development. And most importantly for many of our teachers, they find it's a necessary program planning tool. It is a tool that helps them plan purposely and specifically to meet the needs of their English language learners. One of the things we know about the STEP resource is that it's not an achievement chart, and is not a rubric, and it's not the success criteria, and it also is not the curriculum. We have our Ontario curriculum and what we evaluate is the Ontario curriculum. STEP helps us know how to accommodate program for our students.
- Slide 21 On the screen in front of you there is a flow chart of the STEP resource. STEP is a very large resource with many different components. It has the components of the initial assessment. It has ongoing assessment, and it has profiles. You can see all the many components it includes. And one of things that we believe in is the importance of the initial assessment to our process of understanding our students and getting to know our English language learners. The initial assessment material is password protected on EduGAINS. Each provincially-funded public school in Ontario has a unique password. Each school district determines who in their board should have access to this password protected material.
- Slide 22 As a result of an initial assessment, we find out information about our English language learners. We have an idea of their oral language proficiency, their reading proficiency, and their writing proficiency, and in particular to support this, we have created profiles for students that require the support of English as a Second Language program.
- Slide 23 These ESL profiles are statements about what a student is able to do. It provides some very specific information about their strengths, and some strategies that classroom teachers can use to support the students in their class. It is a good transition document that helps support teachers when students are moving from that initial assessment into the classroom. The profiles provide information about the students' strengths and needs.
- Slide 24 The STEP resource has been designed to support ESL/ELD teachers and classroom teachers in programming for their English language learner. It is here in the ongoing assessment that the STEP resource provides that support. This branch of the STEP resource is designed to support students that require the support of an English as a Second

Language program. This is a student that has been attending school in their home country or they are our Canadian-born English language learners. They have age appropriate literacy and numeracy skills. The ESL continua will support teachers in meeting their students' needs by describing the language behaviours that the student is able to demonstrate. The descriptors on the continua support the educator in knowing what language behaviours to work on next.

- Slide 25 Here is a screen shot of an ESL continuum. You can see, this particular continuum is for reading and we have six steps on the horizontal axis across the top. You can also see on the left hand side where we have the element. The element names and describes the language concept or skills that make a connection to the Ontario curriculum. And then, circled in blue, you can see the descriptors. These are descriptions of very distinct language behaviour that can be observed in any classroom as a part of the daily instructional practices that are taking place. They identify what a student can do, and the associated language behaviours that a teacher might be seeing.
- Slide 26 On the STEP flow chart you can see that we are now focusing on those students who require the support of an English Literacy Development program. To support these students and their specific learning needs we have a continuum and it's called the Orientation to School Life. Many of the students have not had the opportunity to go to school, and they have not had the opportunity to develop learning skills or school and classroom routines. The continuum supports educators in identifying the specific skills that the students may require direct support to develop.
- Slide 27 For our students with limited prior schooling who require the support of an English Literacy Development program we have our ELD continua, which we call the observable language and literacy behaviour continua, and like its ESL, partner it is broken down into oral, reading, and writing.
- Slide 28 The ELD Step continua were designed with only one grade cluster, from grade 3 – 12, this is because the entry points are very similar regardless of the age of the students, it is more dependent on their previous learning than their age or grade. This population of students with limited prior schooling has not had the opportunity to attend school and has not acquired age-appropriate literacy and numeracy skills. This is a very diverse population and it is hard to make generalized statements about their unique needs. It is important for teachers to gather as much information about their specific students as they can to appropriately identify where they need to be on the continuum.
- Slide 29 This is a screen shot of an actual ELD continuum. You can see circled in

red in the top corner, we have the grade clusters from 3 to 12. And there are four steps unlike the ESL continua which has six steps. The ESL continua has six steps and we say at Steps Five and Six students are approaching or demonstrating grade-appropriate language behaviours.

And with our students that require an ELD program, because of their gaps in education and their need for language and literacy development, we are acknowledging that they would not be at the grade-appropriate level.

So we're working in those steps 1 to 4.

And similar to other continua, we have the element, which names and describes language skills and concepts that connect to our curriculum and we have descriptors that describe language and literacy behaviours that educators would see in the classroom.

Slide 30 Many of our students who require the support of an English Literacy development program have not had the opportunity to attend school and develop appropriate learning skills or understanding of very basic school routines. Teachers need to be aware this and not make assumptions about what students can or can't do, or should or shouldn't be able to do, realizing that many of these students have not had that school experience.

The Orientation to School Life in Ontario continuum was designed to support teachers in identifying students' needs in this acclimatization process.

Many of our students in this group have had very different life experiences, and we need to be sure that as educators we are tapping into those life experiences to help build their learning or school skills to support their academic growth.

The learning skills on this continuum are the same as the Ontario Provincial Report Card.

Slide 31 Here's a screen shot of the Orientation to school Life in Ontario continuum, you can see across the top we have our six learning skills similar to the Ontario report card, but instead of using the STEP Steps 1 through 4 or 1 through 6 we have a very different measurement scale. Our measurement scale is "Developing", "Building", "Consolidating", and "Sustaining".

And again, we do have descriptors and those descriptors describe behaviours that you would be able to observe in the classroom.

Slide 32 As we approach the conclusion of this webinar, I would like make a few comments on accommodations, and modifications for English language learners. All Ontario curriculum documents state in them, that the curriculum expectations can be accommodated or modified to meet the needs of the English language learner.

And the ELL policy does state that when the learning expectations are modified for an English language learner, then the evaluation is based on that modified expectation, and it is noted on the report card, and explained to parents. When the evaluated expectations of a course have been modified and communicated to parents then the ESL/ELD box is ticked on the report card.

Slide 33 Accommodations. Accommodations are strategies and provisions that teachers provide that help students meet the curriculum expectations. They do not alter the provincial curriculum expectations. Accommodations can include instructional strategies used to support a student, or the actual learning resources themselves, such as providing text at a level the student is able to read and comprehend. Is there visual support in the text to support the student's understanding of the content? Assessment strategies can also be accommodated to meet the student's language needs. A well-designed learning environment is an important accommodation that can support the learning of an English language learner. Word walls that have been co-created and contain examples of first language along with a visual, are necessary for the English language learner and good for all.

Slide 34 Modifications. Modifications are when we are changing some or all of the curriculum expectations. Modifications are made when the student is unable to meet those curriculum expectations because of their language proficiency. Some times, students who are at those very early levels of learning English may require modifications to the curriculum to address their language needs. It is important that decisions regarding credit or non-credit for modified program in secondary be communicated to parents and the student. And please remember it is not the students who need to be modified, rather the curriculum expectations that need to be modified for the student.

Slide 35 This brings us to the conclusion of this learning session. Thank you for taking the time to learn about supporting English language learners in Ontario. You now know some of the common terms we use to support English language learners. You also have an understanding of the difference between social language and academic language, this will help you consider your student's language needs as you program for them in your class. The STEP resource which can be accessed on the EduGAINS website can support your programming decisions. We wish you good luck as you continue to work supporting English language learners.