STEP
Initial Assessment
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEP Initial Assessment Process</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welcoming New Families</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception and Welcome Centres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Welcoming School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Profile Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Assessment</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Language Writing and Reading Samples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early Literacy Tasks</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading and Writing Assessment Tasks</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Placement on STEP Continua</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Mathematics Assessment</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendations for Support/Placement</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicating</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Designing Initial Reading and Writing Assessment Tasks</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STEP Initial Assessment Process

The initial assessment is a snapshot in time that provides baseline information about an English language learner’s (ELLs) level of English proficiency and literacy development. Steps to English Proficiency (STEP) Initial Assessment is intended for all teachers and administrators who welcome and assess English language learners who are newly arrived in their schools. STEP supports the goal of the *English Language Learners ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007* by:

- describing procedures for reception, orientation, placement, and programming for ELLs
- describing procedures for initial assessment of ELLs
- suggesting the roles of administrators, teachers, students, and families
- suggesting procedures for gathering information related to the initial assessment of ELLs

**Purpose of Initial Assessment**

The initial assessment is an important first step in determining an ELL’s language proficiency and literacy development in English. It is an opportunity to develop a profile that includes the student’s educational, cultural, and personal background.

The purpose of the initial assessment is to determine:

- the student’s language proficiency (oral, reading, and writing) and literacy development;
- the student’s mathematical skill level;
- appropriate programming supports;
- appropriate placement.

This flow chart illustrates the initial assessment process.
Welcoming New Families

School boards will develop protocols to define procedures and practices for welcoming English language learners and their families and providing them with appropriate orientation to the Ontario school system, in the first language of the students and their families, whenever possible. The protocol will include procedures for the admission of students in all grades, including Kindergarten – regardless of level of English proficiency or prior schooling – who arrive and need to begin school in Ontario at any time during the school year.

English Language Learners ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007. 2.2.1.

Reception and Welcoming Centres
Some school boards have reception and welcoming centres where initial assessments are conducted and families receive information about the school board and community. In some boards the initial assessment takes place in the school.

The Welcoming School
All schools should provide a reception and orientation program that ensures a warm welcome for ELLs and their families.

Creating a welcoming and inclusive school environment for ELLs and their families is a whole-school activity requiring the commitment of the administrative team, teachers, support staff, and other leaders within the school community.

What a welcoming school looks like
A welcoming school is an inviting place for students, staff, parents, and visitors.

In a welcoming school:
- all staff are aware of and understand the process for receiving ELLs and their families
- information about community resources (e.g., libraries, community centres, adult ESL classes, places of worship, cultural organizations) is available in a variety of languages
- families are informed about the necessary documentation and process for school registration
- there is access to adult interpreters who can competently assist parents and help them fill out forms
- multilingual signs, in the languages of the community, are visible in the school

Reception and orientation programs should include:
- a school reception team (e.g., the administrative team, office administrative assistant, ESL/ELD teacher, classroom teachers, guidance counsellor) as well as, an interpreter and/or settlement worker, as needed
- a designated place for the family and reception team to gather, meet, and share information
- orientation information about:
  - school calendar and routines
  - content and use of student agenda
  - school programs
  - ESL and ELD programs and support
  - school procedures in the event of absence, late arrival, or early leaving
  - parental involvement (e.g., volunteering, Parent Council)
  - community supports (e.g., settlement services, local adult ESL classes, and other community programs and resources)
  - information about course selection (secondary)
  - safe school policy
- student ambassadors
Welcoming New Families

Roles and Responsibilities
In creating a welcoming school environment, it is important that schools consider the needs of English language learners and their families. Supervisory officers, school administrators, classroom teachers, ESL/ELD teachers, initial assessors, parents, and students all have a role to play.

Supervisory Officers
To support the work of school administrators, supervisory officers should:
• ensure the board’s vision for reception, orientation, and assessment is shared and understood
• demonstrate a commitment to an inclusive, respectful, equitable environment for ELLs by allocating and monitoring financial and human resources
• develop a board culture that promotes shared knowledge and shared responsibility for student success by assisting principals in recognizing and articulating the learning their staff needs to support ELLs
• monitor the board’s implementation of the ELL policy

Principals and Vice Principals
To successfully implement a reception and welcoming protocol, school administrators should:
• establish a school reception team
• establish procedures for reception, orientation, and registration
• establish a process for conducting and sharing STEP initial assessments and recommendations with school staff and with families
• establish a process for organizing, storing, and retrieving STEP initial assessment data
• address the professional learning needs of teacher assessors
• facilitate opportunities for families to engage in and understand the Canadian school context
• facilitate access to community resources and/or settlement services

School administrators can use the STEP initial assessment to:
• support the implementation of board policies for programming/placement, monitoring, and tracking ELLs’ language acquisition and literacy development
• provide data to focus discussion on students’ needs
• facilitate discussion about teacher learning needs to support ELLs in language acquisition and literacy development
• establish the use of common language regarding second language acquisition
• facilitate decision making and focused support for at-risk ELLs
• make informed decisions when planning programs and resources to support English language learners
• help families understand their child’s level of English language proficiency and literacy development
• facilitate family engagement in pathways planning

Initial Assessors
The initial assessor may be a reception centre teacher, ESL/ELD teacher, classroom teacher, or a teacher assigned this responsibility. An initial assessment of an ELL provides information about the student’s level of English proficiency and literacy development in the areas of oral, reading, and writing. This information is used by classroom teachers to help program for a student and to assist in determining the placement of a secondary student in appropriate courses.

For secondary placement, students and parents should be informed that the initial placement is tentative. Schools should monitor over a period of time and revise the placement, if needed.

The teacher who conducts this initial assessment should:
• follow Reception Centre/school protocols for completing the assessment and for communicating with the student’s school and/or teachers
• review carefully information provided by the family to guide their decision making
• begin a portfolio that contains STEP initial assessment data and other information about the student
• make programming recommendations
• complete a tracking form
Welcoming New Families

ESL/ELD Teachers
ESL/ELD teachers could be itinerant, or they could be assigned to a school.

ESL/ELD teachers can use the initial assessment to:
- facilitate discussion of the student’s language proficiency, using a common language
- collaborate with colleagues to develop linguistically appropriate teaching strategies
- facilitate discussions with parents about their child’s language acquisition and literacy development
- make recommendations for programming and/or placement
- select resources for ELLs

Classroom/Subject Teachers
Classroom/subject teachers can use information from the initial assessment to:
- inform their instructional decisions for ELLs when they first arrive at a school
- guide the selection of resources for ELLs in their classrooms
- facilitate discussions with parents about their child’s language acquisition and literacy development
- create a classroom environment which reflects and celebrates the linguistic, personal, and cultural diversity of students

Students
Students can use information from the initial assessment to:
- understand that language acquisition is an ongoing process
- understand their level of English language proficiency
- begin to learn about the supports available for ELLs in Ontario schools

Parents
Parents can use this information to:
- gain an understanding of their child’s level of English language proficiency
- understand language acquisition as a long-term process
- begin to understand how their child can demonstrate learning
- begin to learn about the supports available for ELLs in Ontario schools
Welcoming New Families

Family Interview
The family interview is an integral part of the reception and orientation process. This interview is an opportunity for dialogue among the family, the student, and the assessor. It is an effective way to gather key information about the student and to provide essential information. Adequate time should be allocated so all parties can comfortably exchange necessary information and ask questions. Where possible, the interview should be conducted in the family’s home language, with the support of an interpreter, so that all parties clearly understand information being shared. It is inappropriate for students to be asked to interpret at an interview. Where available, a settlement worker should be included to offer settlement services.

Some families may not be accustomed to answering personal questions from school officials or may not understand the purpose of the questions. Personnel conducting the family interview should be sensitive to the fact that families may be intimidated by interviews with people in positions of authority.

When asking for detailed and personal information, everyone should be assured that this is for educational purposes, and that, in Canada, such information is protected by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and will be shared only with personnel approved by the school board.

Planning for the family interview should take into account:
- The need for interpretation and explanation of unfamiliar school-related terminology (e.g., home room, field trip, and credits) may require additional time.
- Educational documents from the student’s country of origin may require translation and explanation.
- Subsequent interviews may be needed to obtain background information that will contribute to a student’s successful integration.

Considerations
- Some newcomer families may have left their last country of residence under conditions of urgency and may not have brought important documents with them, including academic records.
- Parents may be reluctant to share developmental and educational information.
- Students may or may not be fluent and literate in all languages they speak.
- The home language may have been different from the language(s) studied at school.
- The language of instruction may have been different for different subjects studied.
- Children begin formal schooling at different ages in different countries. In some countries, age is calculated differently.
- Some countries do not have pre-school or Kindergarten programs.
- Terminology for “grades” may be different (e.g., Standard; Form; Primary 1, 2, 3).
- The school calendar year may be different from that of Ontario schools.
- Where records are available, be aware that the grading system and passing marks of other countries can vary from those in Ontario.
- The content of curricula and how it is organized and presented in other countries could be different from the Ontario curriculum.
Welcoming New Families

Student Profile Information
The family interview is the first step in building a profile of a new student.

During this time, the assessor gathers essential information that can facilitate the development of appropriate supports and interventions for the student. It is important that the family feels confident in communicating and receiving information.

The sample questions provide a starting point for this important discussion. Assessors can modify or add questions to suit the context of the interview.

Sample Questions

Early Development and Health History
- When did your child first speak? (words, phrases, sentences)
- When did your child take his/her first steps?
- Describe any health issues that your child has (e.g., illnesses, allergies, conditions).

Languages
- What language(s) does your child understand? How well?
- What language(s) does your child speak? How well?
- What language(s) does your child read? How well?
- What language(s) does your child write? How well?
- At what age did your child learn to read/write?
- What language(s) is spoken in the home and with whom?
- What was the language(s) of instruction in school?
- Has the student studied English before? For how many years? For how many hours a week?

Previous Schooling
- At what age did your child start school?
- Did your child attend regularly?
- Was schooling interrupted for any reason? Explain (e.g., illness, political or social conditions, time spent in transit before arrival in Ontario, migrant worker families).
- For how many years has your child attended school?
- Has your child repeated or accelerated a grade?
- Where has your child attended school? (e.g., urban, rural, refugee camp, private or public schools)
- What was the last date of attendance at school?
- What are your child’s strongest subjects?
- What subjects does your child have difficulty with?
- Did your child receive extra help or attend special classes? Explain.
- What are your child’s hobbies or special interests?
- What are your child’s career goals?
- Do you have school records, report cards, or special certificates to share with us?
Initial Assessment

School boards will assign staff to assess the English language proficiency of all English language learners. The assessment procedure will include:
- a structured interview to assess oral communication skills (i.e., listening and speaking);
- an assessment of reading comprehension;
- an assessment of writing;
- an assessment of mathematical knowledge and skills.

*English Language Learners ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007. 2.3.1.*

The purpose of the initial assessment is to determine:
- the student’s English language proficiency (oral, reading, and writing) and literacy development
- the student’s mathematical skill level
- appropriate programming supports
- appropriate placement

**Oral Assessment**

The purpose of the oral assessment is to determine the student’s oral proficiency in English, and to gain important information about the student’s academic background and interests.

This assessment is done one-on-one with the student. The oral assessment involves an interview and may include a picture response.

**Student Oral Interview**

- Begin with simple questions and move on as the student’s fluency permits.
- Allow students sufficient time to respond.
- Use rephrasing, extensions, and modifications to the questions to promote the natural flow of conversation and to fit the developmental age and circumstances of the student.
- The sample interview questions are grouped by topic and complexity. See Sample Interview Questions. (p.10) Omit or add questions in each category as required. Within each category, additional questions should elicit responses of increasing linguistic complexity.
- Use prompts that build on students’ initial responses to engage them to think more deeply.
- When the student no longer responds, ask simpler questions from another category or complete the interview with one or two easier questions to re-establish student’s confidence.
Initial Assessment

Sample Interview Questions
The sample interview questions are grouped by topic. The personal questions require minimal response, and subsequent topics are structured to prompt increasingly complex responses. Teachers should use their professional judgement to determine how many and which questions to ask of individual students. Teachers may find it necessary to reword questions to promote understanding. Students need to feel confident that their responses will be listened to respectfully and that mistakes will be seen as learning experiences.

Personal questions
What is your name?
How old are you?
When is your birthday?
What country (or community) do you come from?
What country (or community) were you born in?

Basic school questions
Did you go to school in your country (or community)?
How many years did you go to school?
What grade were you in?
Name the subjects you studied.
What are your favourite subjects in school? Why?
What are your least favourite subjects in school? Why?
What do you want to do when you finish school?
Have you used a computer? Where? What can you do on a computer?
How do you think school in Canada will be different from school in your home country? The same?

Language questions
What language(s) do you speak?
What language(s) do you speak at home? With whom do you speak them?
What language(s) did you speak at school?
Did you study English? When did you start? How often did you study English?
What was most difficult for you about learning English?
How do you think it will be different learning English in Canada?
How well can you read in your language(s)?
Tell me about a story you have read. Why did you like/dislike this story?
How well can you write in your language(s)?
Which do you like better – reading or writing? Why?
How do you think knowing more than one language will help you in your life?
How has your English changed since you have arrived in Canada?
What do you have to do to be a successful student?

Family, friends, and interests questions
When did you come to Canada (or this community)?
Who came to Canada (or this community) with you?
Who is in your family?
Who lives with you now?
Tell me about your family members.
What do you like to play?
Tell me about things you like to do.
Tell me about a friend. Why do you like this person? What qualities will you look for in a new friend?
What is your favourite holiday or festival? What happens on this holiday?
What is the most important thing your teacher should know about you?
Tell me about someone you admire. Why do you admire that person?
Initial Assessment

Acculturation questions
Tell me about your country (or where you previously lived).
Tell me about your previous school.
Tell me about your trip to Canada (or this community).
Tell me about your first day in Canada (or this community).
What are your first impressions of Canada (or this community)?
How do/did you feel about coming to Canada (or this community)? Why?
Compare where you are living now with where you lived before you came to Canada (or this community).
Before you came to Canada (or this community), you probably had an idea about what it would be like. How does this idea compare with your experiences?
What three things does someone coming to Canada need to know?

Picture Response
A picture response is an important part of an initial assessment. This activity can supplement the assessor’s knowledge of the student’s oral language by building on information gathered during the oral interview. During the response, the student participates in a conversation about the picture they have chosen.

Visual materials should reflect a global or multicultural perspective, be age-appropriate, and relevant to students’ background experiences. Students should be allowed to choose from a selection of pictures that prompt a wide range of conversation and writing responses. The picture should enable them to go beyond simply identifying items in the picture if they are able to do so.

Another option is to ask the student to draw a picture about a familiar topic or scene. The resulting picture can be the basis for further discussion.

Sample pictures and questions can be accessed on the EduGains website (www.edugains.ca). This information is password protected. School boards have been issued passwords and those with responsibility for conducting initial assessments should contact their boards for access information.

First Language Writing Sample
The initial assessment should include a first language writing sample. Although the assessor may not be able to read and understand the writing, observation of the student’s approach to the task and the amount of writing produced, will provide valuable information about the student’s overall literacy development.

Assessors:
• provide a prompt using the picture from the previous oral assessment task, or provide a prompt about a familiar topic/interest (e.g. a special friend, school in your country, coming to Canada, a favourite sport)
• encourage the student to produce his/her best work, including planning and revision
• assure the student that his/her first language skills are valued in the assessment process
• observe the student as he/she works noting:
  – fluency
  – hand-eye coordination
  – thinking before or during writing
  – organization on the page
  – amount written in a given period of time
  – editing or re-editing
Initial Assessment

First Language Reading Sample
In some cases the assessor may need additional information regarding student’s literacy skills in his/her first language. If possible, use the multilingual resources that are available (e.g., settlement worker, interpreter, other bilingual adults) to provide further information about the student’s first language literacy skills. Assessors may ask the student to read a passage in his/her first language to determine reading fluency.

Assessors should carefully consider the source of the first language reading sample. Dual language books may provide appropriate first language reading samples.

What’s Next?
Students who demonstrate little or no knowledge of English should proceed to the Early Literacy tasks. Students who have greater proficiency in English should proceed to the Reading and Writing tasks. (See page 17.)
Early Literacy Tasks

The early literacy tasks can provide useful information about students who may be in the earliest stages of English language acquisition. Assessors are encouraged to use their professional judgement in determining which tasks best enable students to demonstrate the English-language skills listed below. If the student is demonstrating proficiency it is not necessary to have him/her complete all of the early literacy tasks. Instead, consider proceeding to reading and writing assessment tasks.

Print Concepts
- directionality of text (e.g., left to right, top to bottom of page)
- directionality of book (e.g., cover, front, back)

Alphabet
- ability to say the alphabet
- ability to identify letter names in random order (upper/lower case letters)
- accurate directionality of letters in writing
- knowledge of sound/letter relationships

Vocabulary
- basic vocabulary
- picture/word match
- drawing pictures and labelling
- identifying colours

Sample Tasks

Reading the English Alphabet (p. 15)
- Cover all the lines of letters except the first line. Ask the student to read the first line of letters. Note any letters that the student confuses or is unable to identify. Accept both letter names and sounds. Continue the process line-by-line for upper and lower case letters.

Writing the English Alphabet
- Ask the student to print or write the upper and lower case letters of the alphabet in order.
- Dictate letters of the alphabet randomly and ask the student to record them.

Basic Vocabulary (p. 16)
- Point to each picture on the page and ask the student to say the corresponding word.
- Ask the student to point to the pictures, find, and say the corresponding words from the word box.
- Ask the student to write the words under the pictures.
- Ask the student to write English words that he/she knows.
Early Literacy Tasks

What’s Next?
If students are able to complete the Early Literacy tasks, go on to the STEP Reading, Writing, and Mathematics Assessment tasks. Use the information gathered to this point to guide selection of a reading and writing assessment task at the appropriate Step.

If the student has demonstrated proficiency in his/her first language, has no large gap in schooling, and experiences difficulty with the Early Literacy tasks, place the student on Step 1 for an ESL program.

For some students who experience difficulty with the early literacy tasks, assessors may need to determine if the student requires ELD program support. Further assessment at the school will be needed to determine starting points for the student.

Factors to consider include:
- information obtained during family and student interview about limited prior schooling
- limited proficiency as demonstrated in the first language writing sample.
- limited ability to read fluently in his/her first language
- information obtained from mathematical assessment
Early Literacy Tasks
Early Literacy Tasks

airplane  
baby  
ball  
banana

bird  
book  
car  
dog

hand  
pencil  
shoe  
tree
Reading and Writing Assessment Tasks

It is advisable to begin with a reading task and connect it to a writing task. Sample reading and writing tasks for Steps 1-4 can be accessed on the EduGAINS website (www.edugains.ca). This information is password protected. School boards have been issued passwords and those with responsibility for conducting initial assessments should contact their boards for access information. Students who might be placed on Steps 5 and 6 should be assessed using grade-level texts.

Reading

- Have the student choose a text from a selection based on the assessor’s professional judgement and on information gathered from the assessment to this point.
- Provide a brief introduction to the text and activate student’s background knowledge.
- Ask the student to read the first paragraph/page and identify unfamiliar vocabulary to determine if the text is appropriate.
- Choose a different text if the student is unable to read the story independently.
- Ask the student to read the text silently and/or aloud. Some students may need to read the text aloud in order to fully comprehend.
- Observe and record the student’s reading behaviours (e.g., directionality, one-to-one matching, phrasing, use of visuals, use of cueing systems).
- Review the post reading questions orally with the student, if necessary. Responses may be oral, written or a combination.
- Add or omit questions, as appropriate.

Considerations

- Some students may demonstrate their reading comprehension more effectively in writing whereas others may do so orally.
- Assessors may scribe for students who are best able to answer orally. Accurate scribing of students’ oral responses provides important information for the assessor and the classroom teacher.
- Students should be encouraged to refer back to the text when responding to questions.
- Assessors need to be aware that not all students are familiar with answering questions requiring higher-order thinking skills. Prompts and rephrasing may be necessary to support some students in answering these types of questions.

Writing

It is helpful to connect the writing task to the reading task, the picture response, or the oral interview with the student.

- Explain and discuss the task to help the student make connections to the reading passage or picture.
- Encourage the student to generate and organize ideas before writing.
- Observe the student during the writing process (e.g., choice of text form, approach to planning and revision, use of print or cursive forms, editing, fine motor skills, effective use of time spent on completing the task).
- Remind students to review their writing before submission.
Initial Placement on STEP Continua

Review observations made during the oral interview, first language writing and reading sample, picture response, reading task and writing task. Reflect on what the student can do. Using the Initial Assessment for English Language Learners continua for each strand, make an initial determination on which Step to place the student for oral, reading, and writing.

How to Use the Initial Assessment for English Language Learners Continua

The Initial Assessment for English Language Learners continua consists of five continua. There is one continuum for Oral (Grades 1–12), two continua for Reading—Grades 1–3 and Grades 4–12 and two continua for Writing—Grades 1–3 and Grades 4–12.

When identifying a students’ English proficiency using STEP, the student must demonstrate evidence of all descriptors in the Step. For example, a student may demonstrate evidence of all descriptors in Step 2 and one descriptor in Step 3. This student would be recorded as having completed Step 2.

Students may be on different Steps for different strands. For example, a student may be on Step 1 in Oral but on Step 2 in Reading and on Step 3 in Writing. Assessors should report individually on each strand—oral, reading and writing.

The Assessor records the student’s Step on a tracking form. A sample tracking form is on page 19. The Initial Assessment for English Language Learners continua can be accessed on the EduGAINS website (www.edugains.ca).

Initial Mathematics Assessment

Assessors should administer an initial assessment of mathematics. This assessment can be given before or after the Reading and Writing Assessment Tasks or Early Literacy Tasks. Information from the mathematics assessment is used to determine the student’s program and placement. For more information refer to the Initial Mathematics Assessment Guide on the ELL GAINS page of EduGAINS (www.edugains.ca). The Initial Mathematics Assessment is password protected. School boards have been issued passwords and those with responsibility for conducting initial assessments should contact their boards for access information.
## Sample Tracking Form

Date of Assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Step 4</th>
<th>Step 5</th>
<th>Step 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form and Style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Conventions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and Organizing Content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations for Support/Placement

Elementary English Language Learners

A student’s level of proficiency in English will not influence the choice of grade placement. (2.4.2)

In elementary schools, English language learners will be placed with an age-appropriate group. (2.4.2a)

English language learners should be placed in a grade-level or subject-specific classroom for at least part of each day. (2.4.3)

Secondary English Language Learners

School boards will consider the educational background of all English language learners in determining their placement and the number of credits that may be granted for prior learning. (2.4.1)

In secondary schools, placement in a grade or in specific subjects will depend upon the student’s prior education, background in specific subject areas, and aspirations. (2.4.2b)

English language learners should be placed in a grade-level or subject-specific classroom for at least part of each day. (2.4.3)

It is important to ensure that all students, including newcomers, receive information about the full range of career possibilities and that they have support in exploring various career opportunities and the educational pathways that will help them to achieve their career goals. English language learners moving from elementary to secondary schools should also have an opportunity to begin to explore secondary school options, with support from teachers and parents.

Ells in elementary schools are placed in grade-level classrooms appropriate to their age. Teachers use information from the STEP initial assessment to determine ESL and ELD programs to support students’ English language and literacy development. Instructional programs are adapted by modifying expectations and differentiating instruction, assessment, and learning resources.
Recommendations for Support/Placement

Consideration for ESL Credit Course Placement

There is a correlation between the STEP resource and ESL credit courses as illustrated in the diagram below. Assessors of secondary students report on each of the strands of oral, reading and writing and make ESL course placement recommendations. When making a recommendation for placement, greater emphasis should be given to the writing and reading strands. When a student has completed all of the descriptors of a Step they are at the point of the arrow and would be placed in the ESL course indicated below the arrow.

Consider the following examples:

Student A demonstrates evidence of all descriptors in Step 2 for oral, reading and writing. The recommendation would be ESL C.

Student B has demonstrated evidence of all descriptors for writing Step 3, reading Step 3 and oral Step 2. Because this student has demonstrated proficiency of all reading and writing Step 3 descriptors the recommendation would be ESL D.

Consideration for ELD Credit Course Placement

Information gathered from the initial assessment (first language writing and reading sample, mathematical assessment, early literacy tasks and information provided by the family) will indicate the need for ELD programming.

Should a student require an ELD program there are five courses. Further diagnostic information on individual student needs will be required to determine course placement.

Timetabling Considerations

In timetabling the remainder of the student’s program consider the following:

- Student’s bring strengths and interests
- Students on Step 1 or 2 can be successful in grade-appropriate courses that encourage a high level of student involvement but do not require a high level of proficiency in English
- Students can be placed in age-appropriate classes
- The student’s level of cognitive development and prior learning, not the level of English language proficiency, should determine pathway decisions in course placement (e.g., academic, applied, university, college, workplace)

For detailed information on how most ELLs can progress through ESL and/or ELD courses to mainstream English courses see Pathways to English in The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9-12 English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development (2007) p. 14.
Communicating

The initial assessment information provides teachers, parents, and students with essential information about the student’s English language proficiency and guides teachers as they plan appropriate initial instruction. Schools are responsible for ensuring that initial assessment information is provided to all relevant personnel. For secondary placement, students and parents should be informed that the initial placement is tentative. Schools should monitor over a period of time and revise the placement, if needed.

The initial assessment information should consist of:

- a written report which includes
  - developmental and family history
  - educational background
  - assessment observation notes
  - elementary: program and support recommendations
  - secondary: course placement, support and pathways recommendations
- STEP Tracking Form
- STEP continua indicating student’s language proficiency for oral, reading, and writing
- student work samples
Designing Initial Reading and Writing Assessment Tasks

Educators bring rich and varied experiences to developing initial reading and writing assessment tasks for ELLs. It is important that there is consistency in the structure and quality of initial English language assessment tasks used in Ontario schools. The initial assessment tasks need to be efficient to use and they need to provide evidence to inform the student’s placement on the STEP continua. These tasks should include pre-reading activities, post-reading questions, and suggested writing activities/tasks. The process for developing these initial assessment tasks is described in detail to provide educators with guidelines so that their assessment tasks can be shared broadly with colleagues.

Some initial assessment reading and writing tasks can be accessed on the EduGAINS website (www.edugains.ca) on the ELL GAINS page. These tasks are password protected. School boards have been issued passwords and those with responsibility for conducting initial assessments should contact their boards for access information.

Assessors may wish to design their own initial assessment tasks, that align with the Initial Assessment for English Language Learners continua, to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of their students and to supplement the existing materials available on the EduGAINS website.

Designing Reading Tasks

The following guidelines have been provided to guide the development of reading and writing tasks.

Text Selection Guidelines

When possible, for each grade cluster on the STEP Initial Assessment continua, a choice of texts that reflect student’s English language proficiency and interests should be available. When selecting a text, assessors need to be aware of the descriptors on the initial reading continua to ensure the text reflects those descriptors. Refer to the chart “Selecting Texts to Align with Steps.” (p. 24)

When selecting texts, consider the following:

- the student’s background knowledge and experiences
- the student’s culture and family situation
- the student’s language proficiency – not necessarily the grade level
- content that is age-appropriate and that enables the student to make connections with the text
- a broad range of text forms (e.g., picture books, news articles, websites, graphic texts, charts, posters, short stories, informational and literary texts)

Copyright and Permissions

When the tasks rely on the use of a published resource, texts, and images they must never be copied, modified, transmitted, or shared unless explicit permission has been obtained from the source. Full sourcing and credits must be provided. The teacher who uses the task is expected to adhere to copyright guidelines.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization of text/format</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Step 4</th>
<th>Step 5</th>
<th>Step 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple, predictable layout</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text features such as diagrams and illustrations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple, easy-to-follow layout</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common text features such as title, page number, table of contents, captions, headings, and bold print</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common formats of adapted text such as lists, paragraphs, instructions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common text features such as charts, photos, maps, text boxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout determined by text form—authentic, fiction, or non-fiction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text features such as graphs, indexes, glossaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout determined by text form—early grade-level fiction or non-fiction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text features, such as indexes, glossaries, sidebars, footnotes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-appropriate text features</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single words or short patterned sentences per page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–3 sentences per page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and familiar topics relating to the student’s experience or interests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common everyday topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar and subject-specific topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar and subject-specific topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-level content in various subject areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-level content in various subject areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-frequency words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterned text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple, short sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-frequency words and phrases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some words with multiple meanings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple compound sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some academic words across subject areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A variety of simple and compound sentences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A variety of sentence lengths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 4–12 academic words, low frequency words, and descriptive language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 1–3 academic words, simple descriptive words and high frequency words and phrases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A variety of complex structures at early grade level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-appropriate vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A variety of complex structures at grade level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many clear visuals that help the reader understand the text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear visuals that help the reader understand the text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuals on a page, representing a key idea or concept</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some visuals that support understanding of the text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuals that support understanding of early grade-level text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuals that support understanding of grade-level text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Designing Initial Reading and Writing Assessment Tasks

Pre-Reading
Pre-Reading activities that support student understanding should include:
– a brief introduction of the text
– questions to activate prior knowledge
– presentation/explanation of key vocabulary

Post Reading Questions
When designing questions/tasks about the reading text, assessors need to be aware of the descriptors on the initial reading continua to ensure the questions/tasks reflect those descriptors across the elements of meaning, form and style, and fluency. Depending on the text and Step descriptor the following examples could be helpful:

What happened after…?
Describe what happened at…
Can you tell why…?
Label…
Make a timeline of events…
What was the main idea…?
Explain the difference between…
What do you think could happen next?
Tell the story in your own words…
Compare…to something that has happened in your country/family/life.
What questions would you ask of…?
From the information given, develop a set of instructions about…
If…what might the ending have been?
How is…similar to…?
What were some of the motives behind…?
What was the problem with…?
What was the character thinking when he/she…?
Predict a solution to…
Describe your feelings about…
List the steps to…
Why are some of the words in italics/quotation marks/bold print/upper case letters?
What does the picture tell you…?
How does the picture help you understand…?
Why are there subtitles in…?
What would have been a better way to…?
How effective are…?
Designing Initial Reading and Writing Assessment Tasks

Designing Writing Tasks
The writing task can be about topics discussed in the oral interview, the picture response, or it can relate to the reading text. When designing a writing task, assessors need to be aware of the descriptors on the STEP initial writing continua to ensure the task reflects those descriptors, across the elements of developing and organizing content and language conventions. The writing task and prompts should enable the student to demonstrate organization of ideas and information and knowledge of language conventions. Careful consideration should be given to the age of the student and his/her English language proficiency.

Developing and Organizing Content
The following writing formats are a suggested progression from beginner to more complex tasks:

- picture-word match
- labelling
- sentence completion
- graphic organizer
- short sentences
- short paragraphs (with or without the aid of structured prompts)
- three linking paragraphs (with or without a model)
- five-paragraph composition (with or without a model)

Language Conventions
The writing task should allow the student to demonstrate the appropriate use of:

- conventions of English print (e.g. directionality)
- sentence structure
- vocabulary
- linking words to show the relationship between and among ideas
- language conventions (e.g. spelling, grammar)