



ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT IN TDSB ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: Q. AND A.

“Students should not be viewed as having learning disabilities on the basis of performance or behaviours that reflect a process of language acquisition or acculturation, or a lack of prior opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills being tested. ELLs must have equitable access to appropriate programming to ensure that they reach their potential.”

(Supporting English Language Learners, A practical guide for Ontario educators, Grades 1 to 8, Ministry of Education, 2008, page 44)

1. WHAT IS AN ADAPTED PROGRAM FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs)?

“Teachers must adapt the instructional program in order to facilitate the success of English language learners in their classrooms.”

(Supporting English Language Learners, A practical guide for Ontario educators, Grades 1 to 8, Ministry of Education, 2008, page 50)

Appropriate adaptations to the instructional program include accommodations and modifications.

Accommodations are strategies and provisions provided by the teacher to enable students to meet the curriculum expectations. When a student’s program is accommodated, the provincial curriculum expectations are not altered.

Modifications are changes made to the age-appropriate, grade-level provincial curriculum expectations.

Modification of some or all of the curriculum expectations may be required to support English language learners, especially those who are in the early stages of learning English or those who have had limited prior schooling. Appropriate modifications for ELLs include revising the expectations so that they are challenging but attainable for the learner at his or her present level of English proficiency, reducing the number of expectations, and reducing the complexity of the expectations.

*(Supporting English Language Learners, A practical guide for Ontario educators, Grades 1 to 8, Ministry of Education, 2008, page 50-51); Growing Success. Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools. First Edition, Covering Grades 1 to 12. Ministry of Education, 2010, page 7
1 March 2014, TDSB ESL/ELD Department)*

2. WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS FOR ELLs?

Accommodations related to **instructional strategies** include:

- extensive use of visual cues;
- use of graphic organizers;
- strategic use of students' first languages;
- allowance of extra time;
- pre-teaching of key words;
- simplification/repetition of instructions as needed;
- simultaneous use of oral and written instructions.

Accommodations related to **learning resources** include

- extensive use of visual materials;
- use of adapted texts and bilingual dictionaries;
- use of dual-language materials;
- use of technology.

Accommodations related to **assessment strategies** include

- allowance of extra time;
- use of alternative assessment strategies (e.g. oral interviews, learning logs, or portfolios);
- use of simplified language and instructions (e.g. in the context of tasks that require completion of graphic organizers and cloze sentences).

(Growing Success. Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools. First Edition, Covering Grades 1 to 12. Ministry of Education, 2010, pages 77-78.

The following examples indicate the types of modifications that may be appropriate.

Grade 4 Science and Technology Example: Strand B Life Systems

B1.1 assess ways in which plants are important to humans and other living things, taking different perspectives into consideration, and identify ways in which humans can protect native plant species and their habitats

Modified Expectation:

B1.1 assess two ways in which plants are important to humans and other living things and identify one way in which humans can protect native plant species and their habitat

Grade 5 Math Example, Financial Literacy: Strand F Financial Literacy

F1.1 describe several ways money can be transferred among individuals, organizations, and businesses

Modified expectation:

Describe two ways in which money can be transferred among individuals

Grade 7 History Example, NEW FRANCE AND BRITISH NORTH AMERICA, 1713–1800

A3. Understanding Historical Context: Events and their Consequences: identify factors leading to some key events and/or trends that occurred in and/or affected Canada between 1713 and 1800

Modified expectation:

A3.1 Identify one factor that led to one key event that occurred in and/or affected Canada between 1713 and 1800.

Grade 8 Language Example: Strand D. Composition: Expressing Ideas and Creating Texts

D3.1 produce final texts using appropriate techniques and tools, including digital design and production tools, to achieve the intended effect:

Modified expectation:

Produce a final patterned text using a combination of English and L1 words, using one production tool to achieve the intended effect.

3. WHAT IS AN IEP?

An IEP is an Individual Education Plan which is a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student based on a thorough assessment of the student's strengths and needs. (*The Individual Education Plan (IEP), A Resource Guide, Ministry of Education, 2004, page 6*)

4. DOES AN ELL NEED TO HAVE AN IEP IN ORDER TO RECEIVE AN ADAPTED PROGRAM?

No. All ELLs are entitled to receive an adapted instructional program based on their current level of English proficiency.

5. CAN AN ELL RECEIVE ESL SUPPORT AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT SIMULTANEOUSLY?

Yes. Some ELLs have Special Education needs. They are as likely as any other student to be intellectually gifted, to have a learning disability, behavioural exceptionalities, and/or even to have multiple exceptionalities. However, the same behaviours in one student may have a different cause than for another. This is especially true in the case of ELLs. Strong similarities of surface behaviours may lead teachers to make incorrect assumptions about their learners. The first step is a careful observation, over time, of what the student can do in a variety of classroom activities and settings. Conclusions must be cautiously drawn to avoid inaccurate labelling of the causes of the behaviours observed in the classroom.

(*Supporting English Language Learners, A practical guide for Ontario educators, Grades 1 to 8, Ministry of Education, 2008, page 43-44*)

Some potential difficulties related to language learning or to Special Education needs

Observable behaviour	Possible explanation in a language learning context	Possible explanation in a Special Education context
Adds or deletes words; uses known words to replace other words	May not yet know the word; may not have internalized the words or requires more rehearsal of words	Has memory/oral language processing difficulties
Is easily distracted	Doesn't understand; is overloaded with new information; requires more visual/concrete support	Has an auditory processing problem, ADHD, or ADD
Has trouble following directions	Doesn't know the vocabulary in the instructions	Has sequencing or memory problems
Can complete arithmetic calculations but not solve word problems	Doesn't know vocabulary of the word problem; isn't familiar with the currency; has no prior experience with the content	Has processing or abstract reasoning problems; a memory problem; sequencing issue; may not be able to generalize from previous examples
Avoids writing	Lacks confidence or is not comfortable with having multiple drafts of work before the final version	Has fine motor difficulties and limited expressive language
Can't retell a story in sequence or summarize a plot	Is unfamiliar with too much of the vocabulary of the story	Has organization or processing problems

Adapted from: Else Hamayan, Barbara Marler, Cristina Sanchez-Lopez, and Jack Damico. Special Education Considerations for English Language Learners: Delivering a Continuum of Services. Caslon Publishing, 2007, page 40.

School boards will develop a protocol for identifying English language learners who may also have special education needs. If information from the student's home country, from initial assessment, or from early teacher observation indicates that the student may have special education needs, the student will be referred to the appropriate school team. When Special Education needs have been identified, either in the initial assessment or through later assessments, students are eligible for ESL or ELD services and special education services simultaneously.

(English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4.)

The administration and interpretation of psycho-educational assessments should be linguistically appropriate (i.e. tests should be administered in the student's dominant language or with the assistance of a bilingual educator whenever possible). As well, assessors should use more than one instrument or set of instruments in considering the learning characteristics and describing the performance of ELLs. Assessors should also take into account the student's prior opportunities for learning. The development of an IEP for an ELL needs to take into consideration both needs related to language learning and needs related to the student's exceptionality.

6. WHAT IS THE TDSB’S PROTOCOL FOR IDENTIFYING ELLs WHO MAY ALSO HAVE SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS?

The TDSB has a process consisting of three phases which details considerations that may help determine if a psychological assessment should be recommended for English Language Learners whose progress is of concern. This process is found in the TDSB document entitled “English Language Learners School-Based Considerations Prior to Referral for Psychological Assessment” which is available on the ESL/ELD web page under “Programming, Teaching & Learning”.

The TDSB's Psychological Services Department has guidelines for the psychological assessment of English Language Learners. These guidelines are found in the TDSB document entitled “Guidelines for Psychological Assessment of English Language Learners”

7. HOW DO YOU REPORT ON AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER WHO HAS AN IEP?

If the expectations in the IEP are based on expectations outlined for a grade in a particular subject and/or strand in an Ontario curriculum document, but vary from the expectations of the regular program for the grade, teachers must check the “IEP” box for that subject/strand on the Elementary Progress Report Card and the Elementary Provincial Report Card. On the provincial report card, teachers must also include the following statement in the section “Strengths/Next Steps for Improvement”: “This (letter grade/percentage mark) is based on achievement of expectations in the IEP that vary from the Grade X expectations (and/or) are an (increase/decrease) in the (number and/or complexity) of curriculum expectations.

For Grades 1 to 8, when a student’s achievement is based on expectations modified from the grade-level curriculum expectations to support English language learning needs, teachers will indicate this by checking the “ESL/ELD” boxes on the progress report cards and the provincial report cards for the appropriate subject(s)/strand(s).

For an English Language Learner, when modifications to curriculum expectations have been made to address both language learning needs and special education needs, the teacher will check both the “ESL/ELD” box and the “IEP” box. Ministry policy for English Language Learners states that students can be eligible for both ESL/ELD and special education services.

Growing Success. Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools. First Edition, Covering Grades 1 to 12. Ministry of Education, 2010, pages 61, 63-64.