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2021 Short-Term E-Exchange Program – Research Submission

Assessment, tracking and reporting English language skills

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E-Exchange participant during 2021 with:

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 A picture of the area surrounding Banff, Canada, containing mountains, a glacier lake, and fir trees 



# Introduction

As part of the International E-Exchange Program, a virtual exchange was completed between Karen Brown, EAL/D Education Lead teacher, Parramatta network of schools, NSW and Sarah Jordan, ELL strategist, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. This exchange provided an opportunity for short-term one-on-one partnerships between educators with similar interests or fields, in this case leading schools to develop effective processes to support and differentiate for EAL/D learners.

Our shared professional role is to support communities of schools to develop and enhance differentiation procedures for EAL/D (English as an additional language or dialect) students. This includes working with teams of teachers in specific high need schools to develop teacher professional knowledge and greater capacity to support the English language skills of targeted students.

# E-Exchange Overview

Sarah and I met regularly and spent time reflecting and sharing ideas, challenges and resources that we found useful in our role. These included EAL/D state policy documents and department resources. It was a surprise to discover many similarities in our role, our approach to effective leadership in schools as well as processes and practices to assess, monitor and report on EAL/D learners. The research driving effective change and the need to work closely with small groups of targeted teachers using a inquiry action research model was another surprising point of common reference.

This report highlights some of the commonalities and differences between systems and current approaches to assessing, monitoring and reporting on the English language proficiency skills and needs of EAL/D students in line with the NSW Department of Education, and Alberta Public Schools, Alberta, Canada.

# Focus area

Key findings of the 2021 Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) report [English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) effective school practices](https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/educational-data/cese/publications/practical-guides-for-educators/eald-effective-school-practices-school-resource) include the value of distributed leadership as a foundation for successful EAL/D education, the need for implementing high challenge high support teaching programs and the need for developing specialised EAL/D knowledge for all classroom and subject teachers. The [EAL/D advice for schools](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/policy-library/associated-documents/eald_advice.pdf) also highlights the importance of identification, tracking and reporting on English language proficiency as an important element in developing schools’ capacity to support EAL/D learners. This research helped to drive discussions between Sarah and myself around assessment, tracking and reporting procedures for EAL/D learners, the similarities and differences between the different systems and whether there was something we could then refine or adapt to use when working with our targeted schools.

# Findings / Similarities and Differences

During weekly discussions, personal and professional experiences were shared. We were able to compare and contrast procedures and resources between the two educational systems and make informed decisions about how to synthesise our new information into our current professional roles.

## Similarities and Differences

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|  | similarities | differences |
| English language assessment procedures | Students assessed on arrival to the country or when enrolling in a school | NSW: needs to be updated at least twice a year  Alberta: updated regularly (up to 3 times a year) |
| English language assessment rubrics and tasks | Use state/national rubrics for assessing English language proficiency  Rubrics divided between levels of school e.g. K-2, 3-6, 7-10  Use of student work samples to match to rubrics  Different tasks for all 4 macro skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing)  Use to inform programming, teaching and targeted support for EAL/D ELL students  Student work samples available online | NSW: some assessment task examples from ACARA  Alberta: specific assessment tasks for the macro skills which are differentiated for level of English skills  Alberta: a range of standardized assessment tasks are available for use  Alberta: short videos demonstrating how to administer these assessment tasks  Alberta: very specific examples of student work samples at all phase levels and all levels of schooling |
| English language phases | Overall phase levels are calculated for students as well as specific phase levels for each of the 4 macro skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing)  Increasing complexity of English language skills indicated in the phase levels | NSW: phases are Beginning, Emerging, Consolidating and Developing  Alberta: phases are Beginning, Developing, Expanding, Bridging and Extending  Some differences in the higher levels about the cultural knowledge and English language support needed by students |
| English language acquisition phase markers | Detailed information about phase markers | NSW: use of both EAL/D literacy progression phases and ESL scales to assess English skills across 4 language domains: communication, language and cultural understanding, language structures and features  Alberta: use of the Alberta ESL benchmarks across 7 communicative competencies: linguistic grammar, linguistic syntax, strategic, socio-linguistic, discourse and editing to measure student skills and success.  Alberta: phase markers also written as ‘I can’ to use as student Learning Intentions/Success Criteria |
| Funding for EAL/D students | EAL/D ELL students receive additional support for learning English | NSW: additional support is given for students at the beginning levels of learning English  Alberta: all ELL students receive the same amount of funding |
| Reporting on English language skills | English language proficiency skills and phase levels are part of mandatory reporting requirements  Sample examples of report comments available |  |
| Support for EAL/D students at school | EAL/D ELL students receive targeted funding for school based teacher support  Students with limited English skills can attend intensive English classes for support | NSW: funding is linked to phase level  NSW: Beginning and Emerging EAL/D students receive additional teacher funding for 3 terms  NSW: Beginning and Emerging EAL/D refugee students receive additional teacher funding and SLSO bilingual support allocation  NSW: EAL/D teachers are appointed as additional specialist teachers in schools to provide support and differention for EAL/D students (along with classroom teachers)  Alberta: all ELL students receive equal funding for support at a school level  Alberta: classroom teachers are responsible for ELL differentiation and support  Alberta: ELL champions are appointed in schools which is an additional responsibility for a teacher to promote ELL pedagogy and support in a school  Alberta: ELL students in grades 4-12 can attend intensive English support classes |

# Conclusion / Recommendations & sharing

Sarah and I have been able to reflect on our professional roles and how we could incorporate new ideas, thinking and learning into our work with school communities.

Some ideas and wonderings I plan to implement are:

* developing differentiated EAL/D assessment tasks with clear rubrics for students in K-2 for oral language and reading comprehension
* creating learning intentions and success criteria for EAL/D assessment tasks based on the EAL/D learning progression and ESL Scales
* creating EAL/D assessment task videos as teaching examples

# Acknowledgements

[EAL/D advice for schools](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/policy-library/associated-documents/eald_advice.pdf)

[English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) effective school practices](https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/educational-data/cese/publications/research-reports/eald-effective-school-practices)

[EAL/D learning progression](https://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EALD_Resource_-_EALD_Learning_Progression.pdf)

[Alberta supporting English Language Learners](https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/search.html)

[The Balanced Literacy Diet: Putting reserach into practice in the classroom](https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/balancedliteracydiet/Oral_Language_ELL.html)

Simon Breakspear and Bronwyn Ryrie Jones(2020) **Teaching Sprints: How Overloaded Educators Can Keep Getting Better**

Melinda Miller and Valentina Gonzalez (2020) **Reading & Writing with English Learners: A Framework for K-5**

Lyn Sharratt(2018) **CLARITY: What Matters MOST in Learning, Teaching, and Leading**