

Supporting English Language Learners, Multilingual Students and Their Families

Administrative Procedure

Status:	Active
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Responsibility:	Superintendent of Education (School Programs)

Intended Purpose

The Halton District School Board is committed to the academic achievement, engagement, and well-being of all students. It is the purpose of this administrative procedure to set forth the supports specific to the needs of English language learners and their families.

Definitions

Many terms are used to describe students who speak a language in addition to English, or whose guardians/parents speak one or more languages other than English at home. Throughout this resource you will find that the terms English language learner (ELL) and Multilingual Language Learner (MLL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) have been used; “English language learner”, and ‘English as a Second Language’ because it is predominantly found in ministry policy and resources, and is typically the term used to refer to students who are eligible for English language support services in Ontario schools. However, there has been an increasing shift towards the use of “Multilingual Language Learner” (MLL) which is considered to be more asset oriented by positioning home languages as valuable cultural capital to be expanded upon.

As defined in Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007, Section 2.5.1:

English Language Learners (ELL) - students in provincially funded English language schools whose first language is a language other than English, or is a variety of English that is significantly different from the variety used for instruction in Ontario’s schools, and who may require focused educational support to assist them in attaining proficiency in English.

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English as a Second Language (ESL) - programs intended for students whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools. Students in these programs have had educational opportunities to develop age-appropriate first-language literacy skills.

English Language Development (ELD) - programs intended for students whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools. Students in these programs are most often from countries in which their access to education has been limited, and they have had limited opportunities to develop language and literacy skills in any language. Schooling in their countries of origin has been inconsistent, disrupted, or even completely unavailable throughout the years that these children would otherwise have been in school. As a result, they arrive in Ontario schools with significant gaps in their education.

The Ministry procedures and protocols used to support English language learners (ELLs) are articulated in the Ministry document Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007. While it is the intent of this procedure to outline the process to be followed in procedures for registering, orienting and delivering English as a Second Language (ESL) program and support for ELLs, greater detail may be found in the above named document.

1. Procedures for the Reception and Orientation of Multilingual Students learning English and their Families

- 1.1. Reception and the HDSB Welcome Centre:** The purpose of the HDSB Welcome Centre is to welcome families new to Canada and help initiate the school registration process. With few exceptions, initial assessments will be conducted for students in grades 9-12 at the Welcome Centre. Students in the Elementary panel will be assessed at their schools during the school year and at the Welcome Centre during the summer intake months. Students are registered and families receive information about the Ontario education system, school board and settlement services within the community.

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The following students will be enrolled with the HDSB at the Welcome Centre and may be assessed for English language and first language proficiency using the Ministry of Education Initial STEP (Steps to English Proficiency) Assessment (i.e., Oral, Reading, Writing and Mathematics):

- students who are new to Canada or entering the Ontario school system for the first time and whose first language is one other than English (or is a variety of English significantly different from the variety used for instruction in Ontario schools),
- any student from a French-language school in Canada,
- all International fee-paying students,
- all students whose first language is one other than English who are re-entering Canada after an absence of a year or more who have English language needs; or,
- any multilingual student learning English who is coming from a home school or from a non-inspected private school within Ontario, as identified by the Ontario Ministry of Education
- any multilingual student learning English who is coming from an inspected private school within Ontario but does not have a current STEP assessment.

Note: As the Kindergarten program provides extensive opportunities for oral language development, Kindergarten students are not considered for ESL withdrawal support. Although, the Kindergarten STEP document can be used as a planning document to support year 2 students.

Note: Elementary Registration during the school year: In Grades 1-5, an initial assessment will not be completed; instead, the ongoing OLB will be implemented within 6 weeks of arrival; In Grades 6-8, ESL teachers at the school will complete the initial assessment within 2 weeks of arrival.

The initial STEP assessment data will be provided to the home school administrator to be shared with the school reception team (e.g., administrator, classroom teacher(s), ESL/ELD teacher, Guidance Counselor, etc.) via the Board's monitoring tool and ESAT/Secondary Student Profile. The initial

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assessment will be placed in the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR) by the home school to support the student's program in all curriculum areas.

Recommendations	
Elementary and Secondary Schools: Program and Support Recommendations	Teachers will use information from the STEP Initial Assessment, or, for students in Grade 1-5 from the ongoing OLB, to determine ESL/ELD programming to support students' English language and literacy development. Instruction is adapted by modifying expectations and through accommodations (differentiating instruction, assessment, and learning resources).
Elementary Students: Placement	Students learning English as an additional language are placed in grade-level classrooms appropriate to their age.
Secondary Students: Placement	In secondary schools, the student's aspirations, aptitudes, and prior learning, not the level of English language proficiency, should determine pathway decisions in course placement (e.g., academic, applied, locally developed, university, college, workplace). Placement in a grade or in specific subjects will depend on the student's prior education, background in specific subject areas, and aspirations. Students learning English as an additional language should be placed in a grade-level or subject-specific classroom for at least part of each day. Students and parents should be informed that the initial placement reflects the student's English proficiency at the time of assessment. Schools should monitor over a period of time and revise the placement if needed.

- 1.2. Orientation to School:** As per section 2.2.1 of the ESL/ELD Policies and Procedures document, schools will develop protocols to define procedures and practices for welcoming English language learners and their families and

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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.

2. Placement & Programming for English Language Learners

2.1. Placement for English language Learners

Students who are learning English as an additional language, including those that have limited prior schooling, will be provided ESL or ELD support and/or programming:

- at their local elementary school, for students in Grades 1 through 8, and;
- in regular classes at their local secondary school (all schools) and/or in congregated ESL/ELD classes (at specific secondary schools) for Grades 9 through 12.

As per section 2.2.1a of the Ministry of Education *English Language Learner Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* document, parents and guardians will be made aware of the goal of ESL and ELD programs in Ontario schools and how they are of benefit to students who are developing proficiency in English.

2.2. Programming for English Language Learners

English language learners should receive ESL/ELD program support until they have acquired the level of proficiency required to learn effectively in English with no ESL/ELD support. The decision to discontinue ESL/ELD support is made by the principal in consultation with the student, the parent(s)/caregiver(s), and the ESL/ELD and classroom teachers.

The STEP Initial Assessment data will be used to identify the support needed by each student. In the cases where Grades 1-5 have been assessed at the school, the first ongoing OLB will be used to determine support levels.

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2.2.1. In Elementary Schools

Students assessed at overall STEP 1, 2 will receive the additional support of an ESL teacher. Students assessed at overall STEP 3, 4, 5 or 6 will receive support from their regular classroom teacher as supported by the ESL teacher. All students on the STEP continua will receive support from their classroom teachers.

If a student has Limited Prior Schooling and requires ELD programming, the ESL and classroom teacher(s) will plan together to determine the modifications and/or adaptations that are needed to support the student's achievement concerning curriculum and language acquisition.

Teachers will use the following documents referenced in this Administrative Procedure to design program for multilingual students learning English:

- *Supporting English Language Learners: A practical guide for Ontario educators Grades 1 to 8 (2008)*
- *Supporting English Language Learners with Limited Prior Schooling: A practical guide for Ontario Educators, K-12 (2008)*
- *Supporting English Language Learners in Kindergarten: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators (2007)*
- *HDSB English as Second Language/English Literacy Development Plan - Kindergarten - Grade 8.*

2.2.2. In Secondary Schools

Students assessed at overall STEP 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 may be placed into an ESL course in lieu of an English course. Students at STEP 5 and 6 may be placed into an English course corresponding with the student's post-secondary pathway. These decisions are made in consultation with parents/guardians and teachers. Students who

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have had limited prior schooling and are at the early stages of English language acquisition will be offered intensive ELD programming and support at ELD schools.

All students on the STEP continua will receive support from their classroom teachers. Equivalent credits for previous education, whether or not this is supported by documentation, should be awarded in accordance with policy defined in Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9-12: Program and Diploma Requirements (2016).

Teachers will use the documents referenced in this Administrative Procedure to design programs for multilingual students learning English.

2.2.3. Special Education Support for English Language Learners

If an English language learner is not progressing in the adapted program, involvement of the in-school support team is needed to implement a tiered process. Further program adaptations as well as the tracking and monitoring of student progress in targeted areas in literacy and numeracy will determine if further supports are needed. This is especially important for students who have gaps in their learning and require ELD programming. Due to their limited prior education, this cohort of students will often require more time than most English language learners to show progress as well as achieve academic proficiency.

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.

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Where special education needs have been identified in the initial or ongoing assessment, appropriate Special Education supports will be provided in addition to accommodations related to English as a second language. Ongoing consultation with the student, parents and other school staff, including where available, the Special Education teacher, the ESL/ELD teacher and/or a Guidance or Student Success teacher should occur when determining programs and supports for the student.

3. Information Tracking of Students' English Language Acquisition in Elementary and Secondary Schools

3.1. In Elementary

To ensure academic progress of all students learning English as an additional language in the development of their proficiency in English:

- students will be assessed each fall and spring by the class teacher and ESL/ELD teacher using the Observable Language Behaviours (OLB) continua or the Observable Literacy and Language Behaviours continua (OLLB) for reading, writing and oral language and the current OLB or OLLB is filed in the OSR; and,
- school staff will ensure ongoing communication with parents of multilingual students learning English (e.g., students on the STEP continua will have an ESL support letter sent home with the Progress Report and again with the Term 2 Report Card and the current letter is filed in the OSR).

3.2. In Secondary

To ensure academic progress of all students learning English as an additional language in the development of their proficiency in English:

- students in ESL classes will be assessed each semester using the Observable Language Behaviours (OLB) continua for reading, writing and oral language by their ESL/ELD teacher;
- students in ELD classes will be assessed each semester using the

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Observable Language and Literacy Behaviours (OLLB) continua;

- students who have finished the ESL program will be assessed at least once a school year using the Observable Language Behaviours and STEP continua for reading, writing and oral language by the ESL/ELD Lead teacher; and,
- school staff will ensure ongoing communication with parents of students learning English as an additional language, e.g., students on the STEP continua will have an ESL or ELD support letter sent home at the beginning of each school year.

4. Reporting:

In both elementary and secondary, the academic progress of English language learners will be reported as per the subject specific Ontario curriculum documents. Students requiring accommodations and/or modifications will receive these, as appropriate.

Adaptations to program include:

- a variety of accommodations related to instructional strategies (e.g., extensive use of visual cues, graphic organizers, peer tutoring, strategic use of students' first languages);
- variety of learning resources (e.g., use of visual materials, simplified texts, and bilingual dictionaries);
- accommodations related to assessment strategies (e.g., granting of extra time, the use of alternative forms of assessment such as oral interviews, learning logs, portfolios, the use of simplified language and instructions),
- modified expectations (e.g., modification of some or all of the course/grade level expectations, especially for students in the early stages of learning English or those who require ELD support); when learning expectations are modified for English language learners, evaluation will be based on the documented modified expectations. This will be noted on the report card and explained to parents. (English Language Learners, ESL and ELD Program and Services, Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007).

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5. Identification and Involvement of English Language Learners in Large-scale Assessments:

5.1. Elementary: English language learners should participate in the Grade 3 and Grade 6 provincial assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics when they have acquired the level of proficiency in English required for success. In Grade 4 all students should have the opportunity to complete the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test 7 assessment that HDSB uses to determine if giftedness programming is appropriate for students. Accommodations for these assessments will follow the guidelines indicated by the assessment creators.

5.2. Secondary EQAO: If an English language learner is working toward a Grade 9 Mathematics credit (MTH1W), the student is required to participate in the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics. There are no deferrals or exemptions for the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics. English Language Learners should participate in the Grade 9 provincial assessment in mathematics, when they have acquired the level of proficiency in English required for success. Students enrolled in a non-traditional Mathematics course (e.g., ILP, ELD Numeracy, Credit Recovery, etc.) will be included during the Grade 9 EQAO test window. As of September 2024, results of this assessment will count for at least 10% of a student's final course grade, up to a maximum of 30%. English language learners are expected to write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) when they have acquired the level of proficiency in English required for success on the assessment. Typically students at STEP 4+, STEP 5, STEP 6 will have acquired the level of English needed to be successful. However, a student's age and goals should be taken into consideration and students may write before reaching STEP 4. Decisions about accommodations, exemptions or deferrals for both the Grade 9 Mathematics and/or the Grade 10 OSSLT will be made according to the requirements articulated in the EQAO administration guide.

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Cross-Reference:

Legislation

Not applicable

Board Policies, Procedures & Protocols

[English Language Learners, ESL and ELD Program and Services, Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007;](#)
[STEP User Guide Initial Assessment, 2012;](#)
[Supporting English Language Learners: A practical guide for Ontario educators Grades 1 to 8 \(2008\);](#)
[Supporting English Language Learners with Limited Prior Schooling: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators, K-12 \(2008\);](#)
[Supporting English Language Learners in Kindergarten: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators \(2007\);](#)
[HDSB English as Second Language/English Literacy Development Plan - Kindergarten - Grade 8 \(2008\);](#)
[The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development \(2007\);](#)
[English Language Learners: School-Based Considerations Prior to Referral for Psychological Assessment \(ERGO June 2011\);](#)
[HDSB Prior Learning Equivalencies \(PLE\) Credit Guide](#)

Revision History

- February 2026 (updated to reflect secondary EQAO accommodations based on current date - p.10)
- February 2021