

English as an Additional Language (EAL) Proficiency Benchmarks

This resource consists of descriptors for reading, writing, listening, and speaking that grades primary–12 English language learners exhibit at various stages on the continuum of language acquisition. These descriptors are grounded in international literature and documents from different provincial education jurisdictions and has been interpreted by Nova Scotia EAL specialists as they apply to our provincial context.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) Proficiency Benchmarks has been developed for classroom teachers and EAL teachers as a tool to support the programming and assessment of language proficiency with the classroom context. Teachers are encouraged to refer to the EAL proficiency benchmarks when programming, and when conducting assessments for learning and assessment of learning.

Because the EAL Proficiency Benchmarks are used to determine English language proficiency, the description of home language is limited in the descriptors. Home language is an asset representing an important cognitive and academic tool when learning English. Learners should be encouraged to use their home language as a scaffold in making meaning of curriculum. The use of home language is seen as culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and acknowledges and values the background and experiences the learner brings with them.

Using the English as an Additional Language Proficiency Benchmarks

Intake Process (by EAL Teacher)	Ongoing Assessments (Classroom Teacher and EAL Teacher)
<p>The Additional Language Intake Process is the student’s initial English language proficiency assessment. It is conducted by the EAL teacher, typically done upon arrival to school or by referral.</p>	<p>Ongoing assessments occur throughout the student’s educational journey.</p>
Evidence to Collect	
<p>The intake process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oral Language Intake: Oral Language Inventory, Pictorial, and Connected Discourse ▪ Literacy Component: Reading Assessment (e.g., Fountas and Pinnell Reading Record) and Writing Sample (English and home-language compositions) ▪ Supplementary Inventories (Mathematics, Student Interest Visuals, and Science Visuals) 	<p>Ongoing assessments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ observational notes of participation and engagement ▪ samples from classroom tasks, activities, assignments ▪ Reading Records (for higher grades student conferences on what they are reading can provide valuable insight) ▪ review of provincial assessment results
Interpret the Evidence Collected	
<p>Information gathered from the intake process can be used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ inform instructional practices and linguistically appropriate strategies ▪ inform course placement at the high-school level ▪ determine the appropriate amount of EAL support that may be required ▪ communicate student language proficiency with classroom teachers 	<p>Information gathered from ongoing assessments can be used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ inform instructional strategies appropriate for the proficiency level ▪ review amount of EAL support that is required ▪ identify additional or alternative supports needed ▪ communicate student learning between EAL teachers and classroom teachers

EAL Proficiency-Level Descriptors

LISTENING				
Pre-beginner	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Fluent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ may not respond to any form of communication ▪ may comprehend basic communication that is heavily supported with gestures and visuals ▪ relies heavily on scaffolded instruction that makes connections between classroom language and actions and/or meanings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can understand simple yes/no questions ▪ can understand slow, simple communication consisting of basic greetings and familiar vocabulary (basic personal and family information, etc.) ▪ can understand some basic communication when supported by gestures and/or visuals ▪ can understand more vocabulary and phrases than they can express; receptive language is stronger than expressive language ▪ can understand simple directions ▪ can follow some classroom routines ▪ can understand some basic academic discussions and classroom interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can participate in social and academic discussions with increasing independence ▪ can interpret some meaning from intonation, expression, volume, pacing, non-verbal clues, etc. ▪ can make meaning of some unfamiliar words based on context ▪ can understand main idea of discussions and instructions related to newly presented information; will ask for clarification as needed ▪ can understand more idioms and cultural expressions ▪ can understand and participate in conversations that are spoken at a more natural pace ▪ can listen to lectures, videos, presentations, etc., for sustained periods of time with increased comprehension of main ideas and key information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can apply listening skills to a variety of contexts and functions ▪ can identify between formal and informal speech ▪ can interpret feelings from intonation, expression, volume, pacing, non-verbal clues, etc. ▪ can employ appropriate listening behaviours within different contexts ▪ can understand most idioms and cultural expressions ▪ can determine correct usage of a word that has multiple meanings in most contexts ▪ can understand most discussions, instructions, lectures, videos, etc., and can identify specific information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can understand most all spoken communication in a variety of settings, both academically and socially ▪ can meet language demands across a variety of classroom/subject settings without support ▪ can understand idioms and cultural expressions; can infer and make meaning from unfamiliar phrases ▪ can identify important information in discussions, presentations, lectures, videos, etc., and can reject irrelevant information ▪ can determine correct usage of a word that has multiple meanings across a variety of contexts

SPEAKING				
Pre-beginner	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Fluent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ may attempt to repeat what is being said to them ▪ may use home language to respond to others ▪ may not make any attempt at conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can communicate the need for translation support ▪ can identify some everyday items and answer basic yes/no questions ▪ can speak using basic words, and greetings; uses memorized phrases and/or patterned speech ▪ can express basic needs, wants, and feelings ▪ can use simple sentences and ask simple questions ▪ can answer some basic questions but may hesitate and/or provide irrelevant information ▪ can use some basic age-appropriate social language and grade-appropriate academic language ▪ can participate in some discussions when English is spoken clearly at an appropriate pace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can identify some errors and may self-correct ▪ can demonstrate some awareness related to subject-verb agreements, verb tenses, etc. ▪ can rephrase or reword if necessary ▪ can engage in unplanned conversations with increasing confidence ▪ can increasingly use newly learned academic vocabulary in the appropriate context ▪ can use expression, intonation, volume, pacing, non-verbal communication, etc., with increasing accuracy ▪ can participate with increasing confidence in academic discussions by making relevant contributions and asking relevant questions; can express agreements and/or disagreements and share opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can use both formal and informal modes of communication demonstrating awareness of grammatical structures ▪ can incorporate detailed and descriptive language in speech ▪ can produce varied and complex speech across a broader range of contexts ▪ can give well-developed oral presentations on content-related topics at a grade-appropriate level ▪ can use expression, intonation, volume, pacing, non-verbal communication, etc., appropriately ▪ can incorporate words with multiple meanings appropriate to context with increasing accuracy ▪ can make relevant contributions by offering comments, making connections, and being an engaged participant in the conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can speak in a manner that is appropriate to the purpose and audience ▪ can speak in a coherent, organized way that includes appropriate use of vocabulary; uses descriptive and detailed language ▪ can speak fluently, effortlessly, and effectively across a variety of contexts ▪ can participate in conversations even if the topic may be unfamiliar ▪ can accurately incorporate words with multiple meanings appropriate to context ▪ can speak with a high level of accuracy using a wide range of social and academic vocabulary

READING				
Pre-beginner	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Fluent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ may not have literacy skills in home language ▪ may read in home language but skills have not yet transferred to reading in English ▪ may have alphabet or letter identification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can follow left to right and up and down directionality of print ▪ can differentiate between letters and words ▪ can identify letters and has an awareness of the sounds they make ▪ can recognize some sight words ▪ can recognize a few familiar words ▪ can read some patterned texts ▪ can demonstrate early decoding skills; may or may not understand the decoded vocabulary ▪ can use some early reading strategies such as referring to visuals or applying the use of home-language literacy skills ▪ can understand some of the main ideas or main events of the text ▪ can make basic predictions; inferring skills may require support ▪ can decode some texts but does not have the vocabulary to comprehend the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can decode texts but may not have the vocabulary or cultural background to comprehend them ▪ can read with increasing use of expression and intonation; fluency is improving ▪ can read both fiction and non-fiction texts with increasing comprehension; may require clarifying idioms and cultural references ▪ can employ an increasing number of reading strategies such as referring to visual aids, non-fiction text features, sounding out, re-reading, reading on, root words and affixes, etc. ▪ can determine the meaning of some new vocabulary within the context of the text, including some words with multiple meanings ▪ can understand and locate relevant information within a text ▪ can read some content-related texts independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can read with mostly appropriate intonation, expression, and fluency ▪ can determine the audience and purpose of a text ▪ can understand many words that may have multiple meanings; can support comprehension with appropriate reading strategies (scanning, reading on, text features, etc.) ▪ can refer to a range of texts to locate specific information for research purposes (internet, social media, books, videos, etc.) ▪ can read with comprehension beyond a literal meaning; more thorough understanding of events (sequence of time, cause and effect, problem-solution, etc.) ▪ can read a variety of texts at or near grade level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can use a variety of reading strategies to support comprehension when texts present on an unfamiliar topic ▪ can evaluate and/or analyze text as it relates to relevance and purpose ▪ can read multiple genres with the objective of acquiring more information and knowledge ▪ can make meaning from idioms, cultural references, word connotations, and words with multiple meanings ▪ can identify and make meaning from figurative language (metaphors, theme, tone, imagery, irony, etc.) ▪ can fluently read, with solid comprehension, a variety of content-related texts across subject areas

WRITING				
Pre-beginner	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Fluent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ may not write at the time of assessment ▪ may copy from a model ▪ may be able to write their name ▪ may write in their home language only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can copy from a model ▪ can draw and label pictures or diagrams ▪ can write a few familiar words or patterned sentences using repetitive vocabulary ▪ can attempt to spell unfamiliar words by identifying the sounds ▪ can incorporate some basic punctuation such as capitals, periods, and commas ▪ can write a few sentences or a basic paragraph on a familiar topic ▪ can use only the present verb tense ▪ can write grade-appropriate sentences with support from writing frames, graphic organizers, models, and templates, etc. ▪ can write some descriptive language and a few details; starting to incorporate some academic and subject-specific language ▪ can use home language as a support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can incorporate some forms of punctuation; exclamation points, question marks, quotations, etc. ▪ can write with some understanding of plurals, word order, and word choice, e.g., words with multiple meanings ▪ can differentiate between some basic verb tenses; grammatical structures are improving ▪ can write some short texts of different genres ▪ can begin to participate in the editing and revising process ▪ can write showing awareness of sequential order and cohesiveness ▪ can demonstrate some awareness of formal vs. informal writing; including some descriptive, academic language ▪ can write some complex sentences and/or increasingly detailed and descriptive paragraphs ▪ can reword text from another author; requires support to put the information into their own words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can write independently and is relying less on previously used scaffolds and support; approaching grade level ▪ can write using a range of vocabulary that is mostly appropriate to the audience and purpose ▪ can write detailed texts of varying genres (narrative, persuasive, informational, etc.) with increased stamina ▪ can participate in self- and/or peer editing practices; can revise and edit text for content, organization, and accurate use of grammatical features ▪ can summarize and synthesize information from a range of sources and reformulate into their own words with increasing accuracy ▪ can write well-developed academic texts across different content areas; appropriate to grade level (lab reports, social media posts, essays, slideshow presentations, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ can write formal and informal texts that include a range of vocabulary appropriate to audience and purpose ▪ can accurately use a wide variety of grammatical features ▪ can write a variety of required texts across subject areas at grade level ▪ can write with fluency and accuracy ▪ can summarize and synthesize information from a range of sources and reformulate into their own words ▪ can independently revise, edit, and evaluate their work resulting in a well-written text ▪ can write a variety of well-developed, cohesive, organized texts; has developed their own style of writing

References

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