



9.1.3 ELL Program FAQs:

What is SD8's ELL program model?

SD'S ELL program model is based on the classroom teacher having primary responsibility for providing language development and access to the curriculum. Our ELL team provides assessment, progress monitoring, consultation/coaching, as well as a limited amount of direct English instruction and support. Similar to BC's French Immersion model, the ELL model is based on students learning a new language in a supported, immersive classroom setting.

Who are SD8's ELL teachers?

SD8 has two half-time ELL teachers: Sonya Zimmer, who serves the Creston schools, and Holly McRann, who serves the Nelson, Salmo, Slocan, and Kaslo schools. Both our ELL teachers are skilled and experienced in supporting diverse learners and have expertise in how to support ELLs in the classroom. Sonya is available Thursday, Friday, and Tuesday afternoon. Holly is available Monday, Tuesday, and every other Wednesday.

Holly McRann: holly.mcrann@sd8.bc.ca

Sonya Zimmer: sonya.zimmer@sd8.bc.ca

How many ELL students does SD8 have?

SD8 currently has 75 ELL students spread across 12 of our schools. Out of those 12 schools, several buildings only have 1-2 ELL students, while some schools have 10-12 ELL students. Based on these numbers, schools can expect varied levels of support from our ELL team. Schools with just a few ELL students may see the ELL teacher just once per week for an hour, whereas the schools with higher numbers can expect to see our ELL teachers for 2-3 hours per week. ELL teacher schedules will be shared with principals in October.

What if I think there is a student at my school that needs ELL support?

If your classroom or school has a student with limited English, please email our ELL teachers: Sonya Zimmer for Creston schools, and Holly McRann for: Nelson, Salmo, Slocan, and Kaslo schools (contact information above.) Holly or Sonya will arrange a time to come to your school to assess the student for ELL services. If the student qualifies for ELL, the ELL teacher will ask your clerical to add them to the ELL program. SD8 serves students assessed at Levels 1, 2, and 3. When the ELL team decides a student no longer requires ELL services, they will notify the school to exit them from the ELL program. Note that all ELL students should be end dated for the end of each school year and be re-assessed for services as needed the following September.

How long does it take for a student to learn English?

Every student is different in terms of how long it takes them to become proficient in English. The student's age and primary language literacy can play a significant role in how quickly they acquire a new language. Generally- younger students with strong primary language literacy learn a second language faster than a student with limited or interrupted education in their home language. High school aged students with strong academic backgrounds can learn English rapidly, but often the high school curriculum is not accessible, which can significantly slow down the language acquisition process.

The amount of English instruction a student receives also plays a significant role in terms of how quickly that student can become proficient in English. An immersion setting can accelerate language learning, but only if there is “comprehensible input” meaning that the student has enough information to associate the new words and phrases with their existing language model. The more comprehensible input and opportunities to practice producing language the student has, the faster they will learn the new language.

The approximate timeline and ELL proficiency levels are:

Level 1 Beginning 1 year	Level 2 Developing 1-2 years	Level 3 Expanding 2-3 years	Level 4 Consolidating 3-4 years	Level 5 Bridging 3-5 years
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How can the classroom teacher support an ELL student?

Classroom teachers play the most important role in supporting ELL students to access the curriculum and learn English. Every interaction and task in the classroom has the potential to be a language learning opportunity. The ELL team can provide teachers with specific strategies for supporting the ELLs in their classroom, but some broad best practices are:

- *Associate language with objects or ideas using labels and gestures (Point to a book while saying “book”)*
- *Speak slower and clearer and support verbal instructions/information with written language (many ELL students can read more English than they can understand verbally)*
- *Provide opportunities for group and peer activities that require conversation and interaction. Encourage all students to include ELLs students in activities, both in the classroom and on the playground.*
- *Add a “language objective” to your learning objective. For example, if the learning target is to compare and contrast plant and animal cells, add the language of compare and contrast to the lesson: “In contrast to _____, _____ have ____.” Language objectives can benefit many students- not just ELLs.*
- *Modify academic tasks to be more manageable. If your students are writing a paragraph, have your ELL student write a couple of sentences with a sentence starter, or make a labelled drawing.*
- *Remember that not all ELL students are the same. A Level 3 student can do much more than a Level 1, and younger students can acquire English remarkably quickly when supported.*
- *Students recently arrived to the country will often go through a “silent” phase. This phase may extend for weeks or even months, but still continue to make the content accessible and provide safe, supported language production opportunities. Receptive language develops far faster than productive language, and you will likely be amazed by what a student has learned when they feel comfortable enough to start speaking.*

What is an AIP (Annual Instruction Plan?)

An AIP is a ministry requirement for all ELL students. The AIP includes the students most recent assessment information, their language goals for the current school year, and their English language support plan, including the schedule and persons responsible for providing ELL support. The AIP is included the ELL students hard copy files, and uploaded to MyEd.

Should I let my ELL student use their phone in the classroom?

While technology should not be the primary means for ELL students to access their learning, it can be an excellent tool for learning new words and for essential communication. Schools are encouraged to provide ELL students with ipads or laptops instead of personal cell phones whenever possible, and to monitor students to ensure technology is being used appropriately. Appropriate uses include looking up key vocabulary, translating phrases needed to convey important messages, or researching information in their primary language before navigating it in a new language. (Language is a subject unto itself, and building background on a topic in a student's primary language before attempting to understand it in a new language is a beneficial practice.) Remember too that not all work must be completed in English. A newly arrived ELL could continue to use their primary language to navigate subjects like math and science until their English skills become more developed.

How do I communicate home with the parents of my ELL students?

Of course include the parents of your ELL students on all regular communication home, and also reach out with a personalized email to welcome them. It can be an overwhelming experience to move to a new country, and a kind message from their child's teacher can mean a lot. Parents are generally savvy to tools like Google translate. While the ELL student can support some communication between school and home, it is important not to rely too much on the student to be the school's translator. Having an ELL student in your classroom is also a great opportunity for you and your students to learn words in a new language about different cultures. Ask your ELL student to use Google Maps to show the class where they are from, invite them to teach the class about their home culture and language, and make them feel welcome by taking some time to learn about their country of origin.

