

ESL Literacy

ESL Literacy learners are viewed holistically to break down barriers to learning. They are identified, placed in specialized classes designed to meet their needs, assigned instructors with specialized training and expertise, and provided with enhanced support services.^{64,65}

64.ESL learners with literacy challenges are identified and placed in specialized classes designed to meet their needs.

- ESL learners with literacy challenges are identified through consideration of some of the following factors:
 - Results of CLB literacy assessment tools.
 - Significantly higher listening/speaking proficiency than reading/writing proficiency.
 - Less than 10 years of formal education.
 - Difficulty in mainstream ESL classes (e.g., they may be disorganized, prefer to do assignments at home, make very little progress, and have difficulty with comprehension, analysis, and following directions).
 - Results of in-house placement tests requiring higher level academic strategies but lower level vocabulary (to distinguish literacy from lower proficiency ESL).
- ESL literacy learners are placed in dedicated ESL literacy classes based on proficiency levels in reading and writing (along with consideration of level of education).
- Class size is limited.⁶⁶
- If possible, different levels of ESL literacy classes are available and

⁶⁴ Note: This theme does not stand alone. Each of the Best Practices in this theme must be paired with relevant Best Practices in the Program, Learner support, Staff, CLB, Curriculum development, Instruction, Assessment, and Resources themes.

⁶⁵ This entire theme is significantly informed by *Learning for LIFE: An ESL literacy handbook* (Albertsen & Millar, Eds., 2009).

⁶⁶ *Best Practices with LINC Literacy Learners* (retrieved from atwork.settlement.org) recommends a maximum of 10 students in a literacy class.

are differentiated by small level increments.

- Numeracy classes are offered as a separate stream, based on assessed numeracy skills⁶⁷.

65. The program hires instructors with the expertise and dispositions necessary for effective instruction in the ESL literacy classroom, facilitates and encourages professional development, and provides instructors with the necessary support.

- ESL literacy instructors are supportive, flexible, and aware of the common barriers that learners face outside of class.
- ESL literacy instructors receive:
 - Specialized training related to the use of Canadian Language Benchmarks and Essential Skills resources for ESL literacy instruction, assessment, and curriculum development.
 - Ongoing professional development.
 - Opportunities for networking, mentorship, and dialogue with other ESL literacy instructors (e.g., through conferences, professional development days).
- ESL literacy instructors are provided with time and resources for developing learning materials (i.e., the extra time is compensated, or instructors have a shortened teaching day).
- ESL literacy instructors have convenient access to adult literacy teaching/learning/assessment resources, materials and computer resources, including
 - A variety of technology (computers, CD/DVD players, microwave ovens, other)
 - Realia & manipulatives
 - Posters, wall pocket charts, etc.
 - Key ESL Literacy resources such as:
 - *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners*
 - *Literacy Placement Tool (LPT) Volume 1 & 2.*
 - *Learning for LIFE: An ESL Literacy Handbook*

⁶⁷ That is, learners are placed in numeracy classes based on their numeracy skills. However, reading comprehension also needs to be taken into consideration to ensure that learners can read the word problems and fully understand questions.

- ESL literacy instructors have access to instructional aides and volunteers to ensure a lower learner/instructor ratio.

66. The ESL literacy class provides a learning environment that is validating, encouraging, connected to the real world, and supportive of lifetime learning. It provides a print-rich environment, predictable routines, strategy training, and plenty of repetition, recycling and practice.

- ESL literacy instruction draws from both second language acquisition principles and foundational learning principles.
- The ESL literacy classroom is dedicated, large, with moveable seating and sufficient space for realia, manipulatives, posters, technology, movement games, along with designated space for small group and one-on-one instruction.
- The classroom and instruction provide a print-rich environment that appeals to kinesthetic, sensory, and visual modes of learning (posters, pictures, pocket charts, picture dictionaries, flashcards, etc.).
- Learning is connected to the real world through fieldtrips, realia, stories, and reading/writing tasks that reflect learners' real-life needs.
- Instructors are aware of the importance of plain English, while still providing opportunities for exposure to a rich language environment.
- Repetition, redundancy, and recycling of strategies/materials/concepts are built into the curriculum. For example, materials and activities are related thematically to ensure recycling of outcomes, vocabulary, and skills.
- Instruction provides sufficient in-class time for writing practice.
- Classroom routines provide a sense of stability and help learners build organizational abilities.
- Learners develop oral control over material (vocabulary and concepts) before reading and writing; oral skills build on strengths, and may include singing, chanting, drama, and storytelling.
- Strategies for reading, writing, and learning are modeled, explicitly taught, and spiraled throughout the curriculum.

- Learners are exposed to and learn to use the technology they encounter in a literate society (computers, CD/DVD players, microwave ovens, ticket dispensers, ATMs, etc.).
- Learners share the wealth of knowledge, skills, and experiences that they bring with them; they teach each other and collaborate, fostering a sense of belonging.
- Small and large successes are celebrated; learners receive continuous feedback on their learning.
- Classroom activities relate directly to learning outcomes.
- Outcomes for ESL literacy classes are informed by *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners*.

67. ESL literacy learners have access to enhanced support services.

A selection of the following enhanced support services is available to ESL literacy learners:

- Transportation assistance.
- Childcare.
- A support worker who is available to help learners cope with the barriers they face and to connect learners to community supports such as medical care, subsidized dental/eye care, legal aid, immigration/family sponsorship, and places to access used/free necessities.
- Additional academic support, such as
 - Academic counselling to support learners in setting both short- and long-term educational goals.
 - Homework help/clubs.
 - Tutoring.
 - A place to study outside of class hours.
- First language support through one of the following:
 - The use of language-specific tutors who speak the language(s) of the majority of the class.
 - Regularly scheduled interpreters.
 - Student mentorship programs.
 - First language instruction.
- Access to realia, manipulatives, instructor-made materials, a print-rich environment (posters, pocket charts, etc.), and a variety of technology.
- If necessary, funding for materials to ensure that ESL literacy

learners own their own workbooks, handouts, binders, textbooks (etc.), which they can

- Write in.
 - Take home.
- Specialized assistance in determining pathways and options when transitioning out of an ESL literacy program. For example, depending on their needs and proficiency, ESL literacy learners are assisted in their transition into
- Mainstream ESL.
 - Adult basic education.
 - Work-readiness programs.
 - Adult upgrading and further education.
 - Apprenticeship.
 - Employment.

References and Further Reading: ESL Literacy

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