ATESL Best Practices Checklist for Learner Support

As adult members of families, communities, workplaces, and educational institutions, learners come to the program with varying needs, wants, dreams, and practices, and with a wealth of experience. As such, they are oriented to the program, receive appropriate support throughout the program, and are assisted in their transition out of the program.

Use the ATESL Best Practices Checklists:

For Individuals

- To learn about an unfamiliar area or new responsibility
- To reflect on your own practice
  - What am I doing well?
  - What am I doing that could be improved?
  - What am I not doing that I could or should be doing?

For Professional development and teacher training

- To identify goals to aspire to and specific steps to take to meet those goals
- To focus discussion after class observations
- To focus team meeting discussions
- To develop workshops/presentations

For Programs

- To identify strengths that distinguish your program (e.g., to justify the worth/value of the program to the broader institution, to funders, to learners, to community stakeholders)
- To identify gaps in a program or practice (e.g., to identify constraints to address, to identify initial and ongoing actions, to determine a focus for professional development, to justify requests for funding)

12. At entrance into a program or course, learners are oriented and provided with accurate and accessible pre-course information.[1]

☐ Pre-requisites and requirements for success are clearly delineated prior to registration, as well as at entrance to a program or course. These include the following:
- Eligibility requirements and pre-requisites
- Funding requirements
- Requirements for specific equipment, software, internet access
- Required textbooks and materials

☐ Procedures for registration in a program or course are clear.
- The procedure for online registration is clear and intuitive, and works smoothly.
- Staff involved in admitting and registering new learners are:
  - Familiar with the pre-requisites and requirements of courses/programs offered
  - Familiar with admission procedures
  - Able to communicate patiently and clearly with language learners

☐ Learners are oriented to the program, the class, and the services provided in a timely manner.
- In-person learners participate in an orientation to the physical facilities, location of services, and safety procedures.

☐ Learners are given print or electronic materials (e.g., a course outline) that accurately describe the objectives, content, and expectations of the course; this material is reviewed by the teacher with the students at the beginning of the course.

☐ Learners are clearly informed of requirements for progression to higher levels and/or requirements for diplomas, certificates, or credit.

☐ Learners are given print or electronic materials describing their roles and obligations as learners in the program, as well as the program's obligations towards them. This includes information regarding the following:
- Withdrawal/cancellation deadlines
- Any charges and fees that may be levied
- Important dates and scheduling information
- Attendance and participation requirements
- Homework requirements
- Evaluation procedures
- Expectations regarding academic integrity/code of ethics
- Grievance procedures
- Dismissal procedures

---

[1] See also Best Practice #52 related to learner placement.

ATESL

☐ Print or electronic orientation materials are easy to locate (if online) and are orally reinforced by instructors (with first language support as necessary in literacy classes).

☐ Learners receive the technical support needed for success in their classes, including the following:

— Help accessing equipment/hardware needed for online learning (e.g., through equipment loans or connections to organizations such as the Electronic Recycling Association)

— Orientation to the online learning platforms to be used in the class, including navigation within the LMS and the use of tools and features for interacting and participating in the course (synchronously and asynchronously)

— (For online courses) an orientation to the course and modules, including tasks and due dates

— Ongoing technical support, both during and outside of work hours

— Extra technology support for learners with gaps in digital literacy (e.g., tutorials, teaching assistants, peer support, extra time to practice using tools and features that they will be expected to use)

☐ Learner pathways are charted. In groups or individually, with an instructor or with an advisor, formally or informally, learners are invited to consider the following:

— Their present skills

— Where they fit into the program

— Where they are headed

— Their needs and gaps (i.e., what they must accomplish to reach their goals)

— A plan for reaching their goals

— Availability of finances (e.g., scholarships, funding, student loans)

13. There are policies and procedures in place that facilitate communication with learners.

☐ There are procedures in place for acknowledging/rewarding regular attendance, completion of work, participation, and success, whether in face-to-face or online settings.

☐ There are procedures in place for contacting learners with irregular attendance patterns.

☐ There are intervention procedures in place for communicating with learners regarding non-completion of work or non-participation that may affect final course outcomes, whether in face-to-face or online settings.

☐ There are procedures in place for dealing with learner grievances and appeals.

☐ There are procedures in place for dealing with plagiarism, cheating, disruptive behaviour, disputes, and withdrawal from the program. These procedures:

— Are communicated to instructors, student advisors, and anyone else involved in responding to academic dishonesty, disruptive behaviours, and disputes

— Are communicated to learners at the beginning of a course and reinforced throughout the term as a class and/or in one-on-one meetings

— Acknowledge the complexities involved with respect to diverse cultural expectations and educational experiences

— Include support and instruction along with consequences

— Include a number of stages and steps

— Are fair and transparent

— Encourage personal responsibility and accountability

14. The program facilitates learner access to appropriate support services, either within the program or through referrals to cooperating agencies.[2]

☐ The program provides the following services in-house, or refers learners to outside agencies/organizations that can provide those services:
— Library
— Childcare
— Accommodation and housing (e.g., home-stay, residence)
— Translating/interpreting services
— Tutoring
— Mental health and wellness support
— Community support
— Healthcare
— Legal advice/aid
— Financial advice/aid
— Vocational/academic counselling
— Immigration counselling
— Other

☐ The program provides support and information to help learners access the following, as relevant:
— Learner Income Support
— Childcare subsidy programs
— Bus passes and transportation (e.g., transportation for learners with disabilities; transit subsidy for low-income earners)
— Disability support and assistive technologies
— Equipment and devices needed to access online learning (e.g., computer stations/labs, personal smartphones, and/or loans of laptops/iPads, headphones, microphones, etc.)

☐ If necessary, the program orients newcomers to Alberta to studying and living in Alberta (weather, clothing, food, immigration/visa issues, dental/medical information, transit, etc.) or refers them to agencies/organizations that can provide that support.

☐ The program provides support to learners with literacy needs or refers them to agencies/organizations that can provide that support.

☐ The program provides support to 2SLGBTQ+ learners or refers them to agencies that can provide that support.

☐ The program provides support to learners with learning disabilities or refers them to agencies/organizations that can provide that support.

☐ The program provides support to survivors of trauma and torture or refers them to agencies/organizations that can provide that support.

☐ One or more identified people, available to instructors and learners, have information on where learners can access services listed above.

ATESL

15. The program establishes and maintains linkages with service providers and cooperating agencies.[3]

☐ Classes are offered in locations where support services are available.

☐ An updated list of agencies and experts for referrals and consultations is available.

☐ In-house support staff or representatives of cooperating agencies and service providers are invited to speak with learners and/or instructors.

☐ The program facilitates learner connection with service providers and cooperating agencies (e.g., through field trips, website exploration).

☐ Program staff ensure that referrals result in meeting learner needs through any of the following:

— Follow-up communication with learners

— Follow-up communication with service providers and cooperating agencies

— Written procedures and records, digital reporting, tracking/monitoring

16. The program provides opportunity for learner participation in the broader community.[4]

☐ The program either offers social and recreational services appropriate to learners' ages and interests, or has a system in place for informing learners of relevant social/recreational opportunities in the community.

☐ Learner involvement in the local community is facilitated by any of the following:

— Inviting people from the community to participate in the program through class presentations, mentoring, community services fairs, etc.

— Planning class activities that increase awareness of and encourage participation in community/volunteer service and advocacy opportunities

— Incorporating community/neighborhood resources and material into the curriculum

— Integrating knowledge of the local area, the province, and the country into the curriculum

— Planning joint activities with other education programs or organizations

— Organizing field trips where learners participate in local community and cultural events and interact with people in their community (e.g., in grocery stores, schools, banks, workplaces, libraries, organizations that provide support services, etc.)

— Assigning homework tasks that encourage learners to interact with their community and to use their language skills in "real world" situations

---

[3] See TESOL (2003), Standard 9A and 9C.
[4] See Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee MWB Educational Consultants (n.d.), p.13–15.

17. There is a system in place for helping learners who have completed a course to transition to other courses within the program, to other programs, to bridging programs, to other educational institutions, or to the workplace.

☐ Upon exit from a course or program, learners receive timely feedback regarding their progress and achievement in a course. Ideally, this feedback takes the form of both of the following:
— A written evaluation
— A formal or informal exit conference with the instructor (in a face-to-face or online setting)

☐ Learners receive information about further options within the program or wider institution.

☐ Learners who are exiting from the institution have access to counselling regarding further education or workplace options, or are referred to agencies that have this expertise.