

AFNORTH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

British Canadian Section

English as an Additional Language



A smile is the same in every language



Parent Handbook



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1. Introduction

The EAL* Parent Information Handbook has been designed to provide EAL parents with information about the nature of the EAL Programme at the BC SECTION of AFNorth International School. The EAL team would like to explain the aims and structure of the EAL Programme and the teaching approaches used. Additionally we would like to provide parents and students with a basic understanding of second language acquisition theory and answer some commonly asked questions.

The EAL team strives for a teamwork approach between the students, the parents, the mainstream teachers and the EAL teachers. A teamwork approach has proven itself as most beneficial to the EAL students and their language learning. The EAL Team looks forward to meeting your children and you.

Please feel free to contact the EAL Coordinator or any EAL teacher if you have any questions or concerns.

* also referred to as ESL (English as a Second Language) and ELL (English Language Learners)

2. EAL Programme

Students who do not speak any English or whose English is not yet sufficient to cope successfully in most situations in the mainstream classroom receive support through the EAL Programme. The EAL Programme at the BC SECTION is levelled and provides instruction for beginners, intermediate and advanced students. The teaching team strives to support EAL students until they are able to function independently, both academically and socially, in the mainstream classroom. We integrate the EAL students fully in the mainstream classes on arrival. A supportive environment is provided in both EAL and mainstream classes to encourage students to take risks in their language learning and to increase their self-confidence. Language is taught and practised within natural contexts and meaningful situations, in which the students feel accepted, happy and comfortable while feeling challenged at the same time being aware that misunderstandings and mistakes are accepted as essential in the learning process. We believe in the valuing and maintenance of the students' native language and culture. Therefore, we are committed to the support of parents in working with their children at home.

Team Approach with Staff at the BC SECTION

We educate mainstream teachers about the EAL Programme, second language acquisition, as well as about the needs of non-native English speaking students in the school. We provide support for appropriate materials. Additionally, the EAL teachers meet regularly with the mainstream teachers to create joint planning in order to best support the EAL students in the mainstream classes and in the EAL classes.

Communication with Parents of EAL Students

Prior to arrival you will be requested to complete the Home Language Survey* (see appendix 1). The aim of this is for us to be prepared to welcome your child. The more information received from you, the easier the transition will be for your child. The EAL Team meets parents at Open House at the start of the school year, hosts EAL Parent Coffee/Information mornings, Parent Teacher Conferences and facilitates individual communication with you.

2.1 Aims of the EAL Programme

The social and academic integration of the students into the mainstream classroom is the overall goal of the EAL Programme at the BC SECTION. We have aims in the following areas:

Content

- **Pre-teaching** of concepts and vocabulary from mainstream classroom subjects, such as Social Studies, Science and Maths.
- Enhance **thinking skills** used in all subject areas.
- **Four Language Skills** – Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing (including Grammar)
- **Develop the students' skills in English in all subject areas.**
- **Build a Positive Attitude and Personal patience**

2.2 Structure of the Programme

Daily "Pull-out" EAL Lessons

EAL students receive 30 minutes English language instruction in the EAL classroom, as well as content area support. Content area support include pre-teaching and reinforcing of vocabulary and concepts taught in the mainstream classroom.

"In-class" support:

Teachers and Learning Support Assistants work with EAL students in mainstream classrooms to assist them with the content work. This service may also include provision of adapted materials and assessments, as well as team teaching situations with the mainstream teachers.

2.3 Exiting the EAL Programme

Students remain in the EAL Programme until they demonstrate the language and skills necessary to work independently in the mainstream classroom. Some or all of the following criteria assist the EAL Teaching Team in determining the students' ability to cope effectively in all mainstream classes:

- EAL exit criteria checklist
- Proficiency tests
- Teacher recommendations
- Mainstream classroom performance
- Socio-cultural adjustment
- Student / parent consultation (where appropriate)

2.4 Teaching and Learning Approaches

Learning happens in context, not in isolation and children learn best when they engage with the language in different ways:

- Singing
- Thinking critically
- Role playing
- Participating in meaningful play
- Discussing
- Reading fiction and non-fiction texts
- Creating journals
- Viewing and responding to video
- Doing research
- Conducting interviews and surveys
- Reflecting on values
- Producing and presenting projects of different types

2.5 Student Assessment

Student assessment is an on-going process throughout the school year in both formal and informal situations. All four skill areas, as well as the students' knowledge of grammatical structures and their ability to use these correctly, are assessed regularly.

Prior to or upon their enrolment at the BC SECTION, an initial assessment of skills** (see appendix 2) is administered to new EAL students, in order to determine student placement according to their proficiency level in English.

Young learners and beginners are assessed orally using our Initial Assessment Interview Older learners and intermediate learners are assessed by the BC Placement Test which has speaking, listening, reading and writing components.

Class teacher Report Cards: students may receive the mark * (* Modified Programme) in some subject areas, such as Social Studies, Science or Maths, depending on their language proficiency level and their ability to cope with the work and assessments given in those classes.

For their performance in English and the EAL lessons, the students will receive an **EAL Report Card** that will display their language proficiency level and their performance in the different skill areas according to Council European Framework for Reference for Language. (see 4A for more information)

3. How Students and Parents Can Work at Home

3.1 Why do some children learn English more quickly than others?

The stages and rates of second language development vary depending on factors such as learner characteristics, first language proficiency, the amount of time spent on learning the language and the type of language programme provided. Learner characteristics include the following:

- Personality
- Background experience and exposure to the language
- Self-esteem
- Attitude towards the target language & culture
- Attitude towards the teacher and the classroom environment
- Motivation
- Anxiety level
- Age
- Academic ability & cognitive style

3.2 How do I best support my child at home and is it important to keep up my child's native language?

- Ensuring mother tongue development (Reading and Speaking)
- Reading in English and discussing it in the mother tongue
- Books that are read in school are often available in many other languages.
- Providing children with rich learning experiences (books, audio-books, tapes, C.Ds with stories or songs, video tapes, language learning games and / or software, cinema, theatre, holiday in an English speaking country, day camps or summer camps in an English speaking country).
- Don't pressure your child to speak English
- Give your child time to learn the new language
- Give your child a lot of praise for their learning efforts
- Don't compare your child to other children.
- Be supportive of bilingualism
- Provide opportunities to socialize with English speakers e.g. After School Activity Programme at AFNorth School (September - November)
- Ensure that your child has a good dictionary
- Obtain materials in the mother tongue
- Maintain contact with the school

3.3 What can students do to help themselves?

Listening

- Always listen carefully to the teacher.
- Listen for new words that you hear many times.
- Ask questions. Tell the teacher when you don't know what to do.

Speaking

- Practice to speak English whenever it is possible.
- It's okay to make mistakes.
- Don't worry about every single word.
- Try to guess the meaning of words from the context.

Vocabulary

- Ask teachers or classmates about the meanings of unknown technical terms from Maths, Science or Social Studies.
- Use a Thesaurus.

General Classroom Behavior

- Show interest and listen attentively by maintaining eye contact, nodding your head and making appropriate facial gestures.
- Volunteer ideas in discussion by raising your hand to ask questions and make comments.
- Watch what the other students are doing.
- Ask questions and tell the teacher when you don't understand.
- Try to understand the big ideas. Look for key words.
- Write outlines or webs, draw maps or charts or use images in your mind of what the teacher is talking about to help you remember things.
- Listen and ask questions.
- Get help from other students.

4. Theories

4.1 Language Proficiency Scale

BC Section has adopted the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): learning, teaching and assessment. The language proficiency scale defines and displays the ability level a student has reached in the process of acquiring a language.

The CEFR is a framework, published by the Council of Europe in 2001, which describes language learners' ability in terms of speaking, reading, listening and writing at six reference levels. These six levels are named as follows:

A1 Breakthrough

A2 Waystage

B1 Threshold






B2 Vantage

C1 Effective Operational proficiency

C2 Mastery

Our EAL students achieve A1 and A2 at elementary level

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - Self-assessment grid

		A1 Basic User	A2 Basic User	B1 Independent user	B2 Independent user	C1 Proficient user	C2 Proficient user
Understanding	 Listening	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
	 Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
Speaking	 Spoken interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	 Spoken production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
Writing	 Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select a style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): © Council of Europe

4.2 Second Language Acquisition Theory

Language acquisition process

Step 1: Building vocabulary

Students build basic vocabulary in EAL lessons and outside of structured classes by listening to native speakers in meaningful situations. Through this, their listening comprehension is built up and practiced. Most students then produce speech in the new language by repeating words or giving one word answers. Some students experience a “silent period”, which can occur and is also natural in the early stages of learning a new language.

Step 2: Development of receptive skills (listening & reading)

The students’ ability to read will develop as they establish vocabulary and learn to speak English. Factors influencing the rate of this development are the student’s age, literacy skills in the student’s first language and if they have already learnt a script that is different from English. Skills and knowledge from reading in the first language will transfer over into the new language.

Step 3: Development of productive skills (speaking & writing)

The last step that needs to be taken is the use of correct grammar structures in their language production (speaking & writing).

We would like to stress that the language acquisition process is unique for each child and it is possible that some students may make more progress in some skill areas than other skill areas.

A fully developed first language is a great advantage to second language learners. They can build on the cognitive and linguistic knowledge of their native language as well as their experiences as learners. The capacity to speak more than one, two or three languages can be educationally enriching and has a positive effect on intellectual performance. This should be valued as a special achievement.