

EAL Initial Assessment Toolkit Adaptation for First Nations and Métis Students 2014/2015

Project Description

The Prince Albert Catholic School Division (PACSD) has been successful in receiving English as an Additional Language (EAL) project funding for two years. Previously, we adapted one of the tools in the EAL Assessment Toolkit to identify the language level of some of our First Nations and Métis students whose first or second language is a First Nations language. We felt we could improve on our first project, and decided to look at the research to become more culturally sensitive and examine what we could add to improve students' conversation.

This year, we piloted the screening tools and further developed and improved the interview in order to more accurately assess and monitor language growth of our First Nations and Métis students. We also explored culturally relevant oral language strategies regarding the development of grammatical structures and vocabulary development. The research supports the idea of identifying First Nation and Métis students as EAL learners.

Our Context

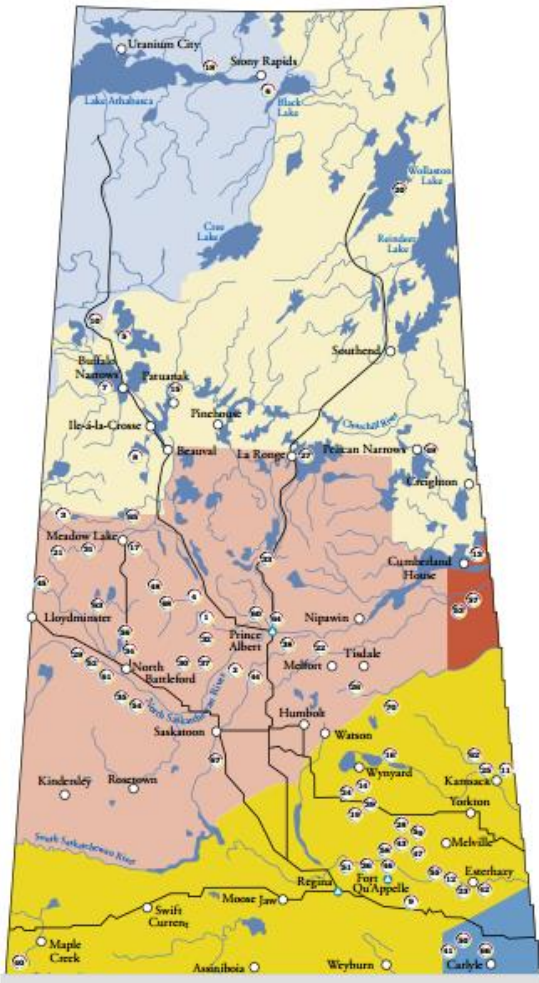
Prince Albert is uniquely situated in the province so that many new students who enter Prince Albert schools are moving from Northern communities. Many students are English as additional language learners or of language minority that is described as someone who speaks English but in a variety that is not valued or promoted in school (Goldenberg, 2013). For many First Nations there may be



www.traveltocanadanow.com/princealbert.htm

“echoes of Aboriginal languages, even among children whose first language is English” (Ward, 1997, p, 60). This language has impact for both the learning and the achievement of First Nations students in school communities.

Prince Albert is referred to as the “Gateway to the North” and may be the first city encountered and experienced by students from communities such as Stony Rapids, Black Lake, or Pelican Narrows. Using Saskatchewan Education data (1997), Epstein and Xu (2005) found that, Aboriginal students make up 74% of the Saskatchewan’s total English as a Second Language/English as a Second Dialect (ESL/ESD) student population, excluding band schools.



<http://www.pinter.ca/firstnations>

In recent years, with large number of immigrants moving to our province the statistics have likely changed but the fact remains that the Indigenous students who are EAL/ESD have not been treated as such or have not likely received language instruction that is needed to succeed in school. The culture shock of coming from an isolated community in the north to a city such as Prince Albert is not unlike our new immigrant families experiencing a different culture. In order to assist new learners, we focused our research question on what we could do to support EAL First Nations and Métis learners in our schools.

Research Inquiry

After many revisions, our research focused on the following question:

How can we better identify and assist First Nations and Métis students with language?

For English as additional language learners, it takes approximately two years to learn conversational language but can take five to seven years, in some cases more, to develop the same language as their peers who have English as a primary language (Tompkins, 2007; Flynn, 2007; Saunder, Goldenberg & Marcelletti, 2010). Verdugo and Flores (2007) found that “although acquiring everyday English is relatively easy, it is mostly academic English that is difficult to grasp and which is highly correlated with academic success”(p.185). Goulet and Goulet (2011) “recognize that students who live in communities where English is spoken as an additional language or dialect may have limited experience with school English” (p.82). Indigenous people have diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Goddard, 2002, Heit & Blair, 1993, Burnaby, 1992, Garret, 1996, Faries, 1991, Toohey, 1985 as cited in Epstein & Xu, 2005) that need to be recognized by educators in order to better meet these students’ needs.

Research and Results

The research supported our notion that First Nations and Métis students are EAL learners even if they speak English and should be designated as such. By recognizing culture and being

sensitive to dialectical differences while promoting academic language may help First Nations and Métis students succeed in school. We compared the research to what we saw in the classroom and through the division program of Talking Partners and three areas of importance emerged. They are as follows:

1. Oral Language Development
2. Extended opportunities for Vocabulary Development
3. Frontloading

Oral language Development is the foundation of language learning. Not only do students need to learn everyday language and structure of language, they also must learn academic language. The extended opportunities for vocabulary development are needed for building background knowledge and also connections between what students know and can do. Frontloading assists students in having an opportunity to examine the text, how it is organized, and learn about vocabulary that may be new to comprehend the text in a deep and meaningful way.

1. Oral Language Development

a. The Importance of Oral language

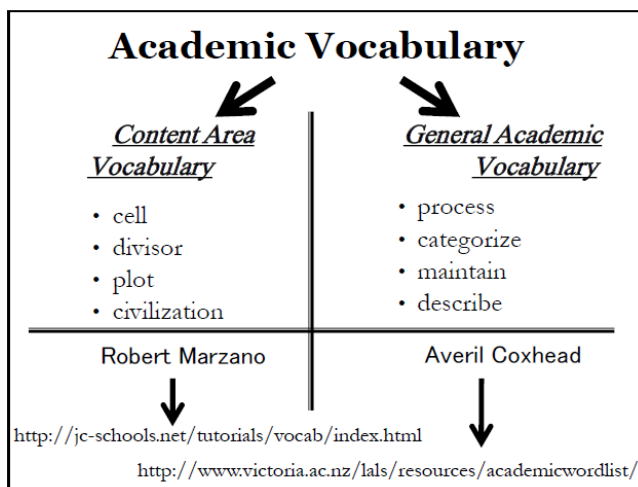
Several studies identify the connection of low oral language and the negative impact it has on student achievement. The development of oral language is key to a student's literacy development and influences all learning across the curriculum (Kirkland & Patterson, 2005). A review by Coleman and Goldberg (2010) identified the relationship of oral language development and literacy development as one of the main challenges facing English as additional language learners. Looking at research in regards to English language proficiency, Verdugo and Flores state, "the ability to speak and write in English is a crucial predictor of academic success and later socioeconomic success" (p.185), while other research found oral language to be a key indicator of reading achievement (Kirkland and Patterson, 2005).

Many studies suggest that incorporating materials or language from the student's culture helps literacy development especially when learning more complex content. Goldenberg

(2012) found that familiar content could be helpful when building background knowledge. Similarly, Coleman & Goldenberg (2010) have found many studies that show teaching English as additional language students in literacy skills in their primary language improved reading skills (Willig, 1985; Greene, 1997; Rolstad, Mahoney & Glass, 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). Based on this research, we collected pictures of the various communities in the north to assist with the talking and feeling comfortable in the interview. See Appendix A for a sample of pictures we use depending on where the student's home community is situated. We also changed the interview questions to make them more open-ended and to allow for different paths for conversation. See Appendix B for the revised interview questions.

b. Academic Language

Verdugo and Flores (2007) define academic language as “the ability to use spoken English with such complexity that one’s academic performance is not impaired” (p.184). The term academic language is used widely in the literature and several studies have shown that the increase in academic language improves students’ achievement scores. Academic language is not as easy to acquire as conversational language and can impact the ability of students to understand both reading and class directions (Sibold, 2011;



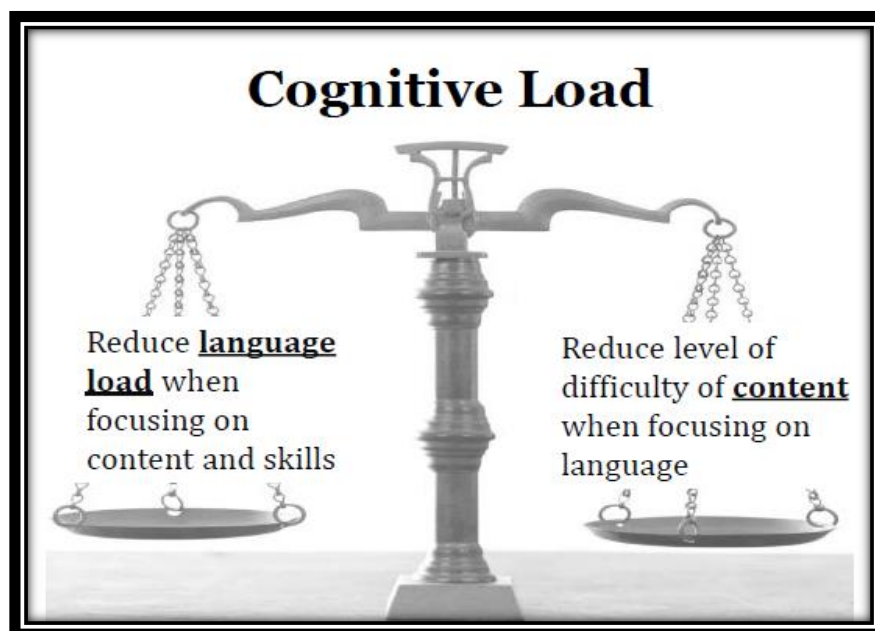
Verdugo & Flores, 2007; Saunders, Goldenberg & Marcelletti, 2013; Ranney, 2012).

Coleman and Goldenberg (2010) found EAL learners face more serious challenges when reading requires increasingly higher levels of language skills, such as those needed to comprehend complex academic tasks.

Here is where the gaps between English Learners and English speakers becomes increasing large. (p.107) Furthermore, since school standards, such as test and curriculum outcomes, expect a certain level of academic language proficiency, students with a lower academic language are at a great disadvantage. For students with lower language proficiency it may be necessary to have

extra supports, especially where learning new or higher- level subject matter (Goldenberg, 2013; Ludra & Jones, 2008; Verdugo & Flores, 2007).

María Elena Argüelles (2014) recommends managing the cognitive load of EAL students. She advises teachers to use the stages of language development to plan instruction and choose materials. Teachers can adjust the language skills versus the content skills. For example, when teaching a new concept, reduce the language load when focusing on content and skills. Consequently, reduce the level of difficulty of content when focusing on language. In this way, students may learn complex language at a level they can understand.

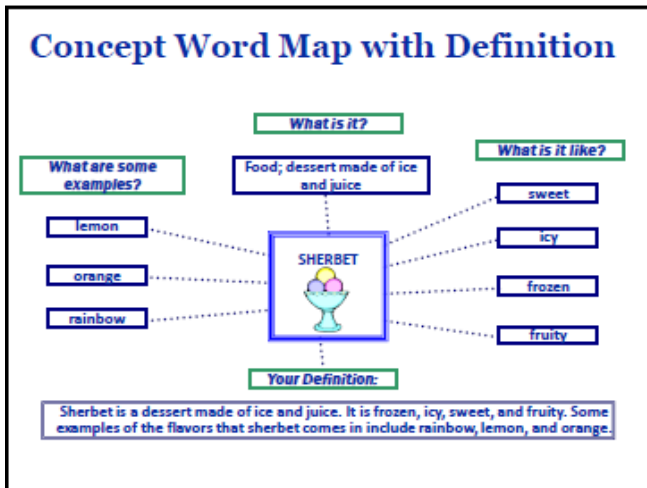


2. Extended Opportunities for Vocabulary and Grammar Development

Often “because talk is interwoven into the fabric of the primary classroom, it is assumed that competency develops ‘naturally’ and without the need of explicit teaching” (Ludhra & Jones, 2008, p.59). One cannot assume that English as additional learners will learn the language that is needed to succeed in school by just being there. EAL learners including First Nations and Métis students need explicit instruction in the structure of language (syntax, textual, semantic, graphophonetic), the way language is used (pragmatics), and the opportunities to learn through language.

a. Vocabulary

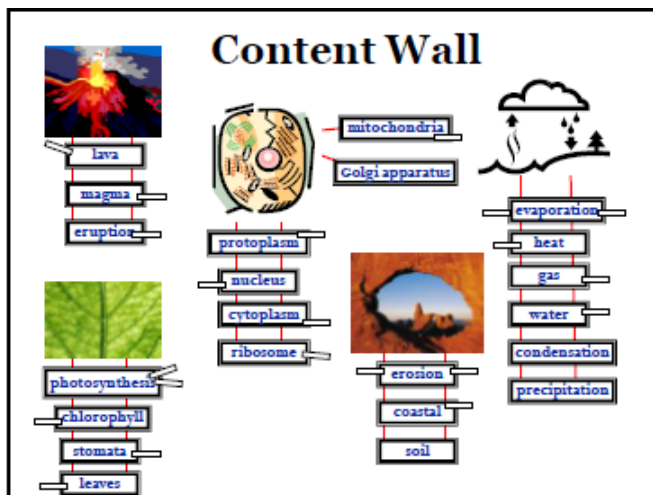
“Direct teaching of vocabulary might be one of the most underused activities in K- 12



education. The lack of vocabulary instruction might be a result of the misconceptions about what it means to teach vocabulary and its potential effect on student learning. Perhaps the biggest misconception is that teaching vocabulary means teaching formal dictionary definitions” (Marzano, et. Al, 2002). Arguelles (2008), suggests teaching concepts as opposed to dictionary

meanings. In this way, a student will see a visual as well as the main idea about the word and how it’s connected to other knowledge.

Arguelles (2008), also suggests using visuals and words together to introduce content vocabulary and build the concept rather than labelling. The visual image is a powerful tool to



help explain concepts and how objects are related. If a word is decoded and pronounced but the meaning is not recognized, comprehension will be impaired (Arguelles, 2008).

b. Grammar

It is helpful for EAL students, including First Nations and Métis students, to learn *about* language and is a necessary tool for thinking and communicating effectively. EAL students need the structure of Standard English that does not just occur in causal talk. Saskatchewan English language arts curriculum refers to metalanguage as cues and conventions. Metalinguistics, which can also be referred to as metalanguage, can support EAL students in accomplishing the challenging demands of the curriculum by making language relevant for academic language development (Schleppegrell, 2013Ward (1997)

refers to metalinguistic awareness as students learning about how language works and



through this knowledge able to select appropriate language, thereby giving the student the confidence in their choice. Explicit modeling through conversation and a chance to reflect on language helps students to understand how language is to be used (Ludhra & Jones, 2008). Scheleppegrell (2013) points out that English learners need chances to have meaningful interactions that explicitly demonstrate language usage in order to support language development. For English as additional language learners that have developed

www.pinterest.com/pin/53058101835857157

metalinguistic awareness, Flynn (2007) found that these students might be at an advantage because of their understanding of language.

Cultural sensitivity and understanding students' language structures enable the teacher to explicitly teach grammar structures. For example, in the Cree language, there is no differentiation between males and females. "In English, we differentiate between male and female gender by use 'he' and 'she.' In Cree there is no gender differentiation between male and female. Instead Cree speakers differentiate between animate and inanimate" (Goulet & Goulet, 2014 p. 58). The structure of the Cree language affects thinking and speech patterns in English and require students to keep transitioning from one language to the other.

Dialect
People from different regions say things differently
People use different words to say the same thing
Let's Say Hello


Howdy!


Yo!


???

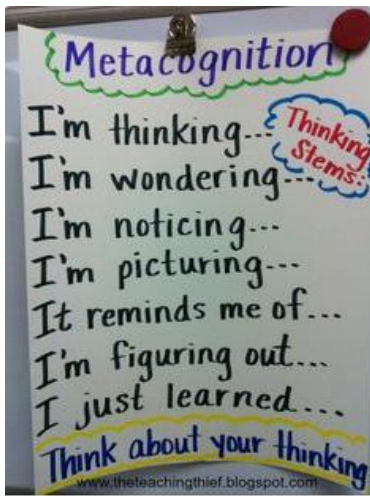
Helps an author develop a character
 Helps a reader visualize the characters

www.pinterest.com/pin/311029917988171381

It is helpful to EAL students consider how different people speak in different places (pragmatic conventions) and the predictable structure of how a word, sentence, or text is organized (syntax cues, textual cues), the letter sounds and how they are put together (graphophonic, phonic cues) and the meaning (semantic cues). Please see Appendix C for more anchor charts and activities.

c. Metacognition

Flavell (1976) describes it as follows: "Metacognition refers to one's knowledge



(www.pinterest.com/pin/313844667755361350)

concerning one's own cognitive processes or anything related to them" Metacognition or thinking about thinking helps EAL students with making connections and sharing information with others. According to Hattie (2014) making thinking visible is the greatest strategy for raising student achievement for all students. If the charts are posted, the students may use them as a reference for answering questions. The consistent language in the classroom, as well as the school is important for students to gain meaning. In Cree, one of the three main forms of the teaching and learning process is teaching oneself

which includes thinking about their own thinking (Goulet & Goulet, 2014).

3. Frontloading

According to Jeffery Wilhelm (2012), frontloading involves creating activities that will either activate knowledge students possess and will need to use in the reading of a text, or will build



(www.edutopia.org/blog/scaffolding-lessons-six-strategies-rebecca-alber)

knowledge they do not have but need to possess to be successful with it. "Frontloading is the most important thing you can do to insure student success. Research suggests that well over half of student comprehension problems can be eliminated if teachers activate background knowledge students already possess prior to reading" (Wilhelm, 2009, p.56). Frontloading activities is a framework to support and organize student use of

new concepts and strategies throughout their reading of a text. Although frontloading can take many forms, it is a way to motivate, prepare and support students to understand new content or concepts. This process involves explicit and implicit assistance to be provided in the before stage of the before-during-after strategies. Frontloading involves the students accessing prior knowledge about the new content, building background knowledge if they don't know the content,

and learning essential vocabulary that will be used in the text. The following questions may assist the teacher in frontloading:

- What topic information do the students already know? What information or experiences do I need to provide for them to be able to understand the "big ideas" of the text they are going to read?
- What information do I need to present to students in either graphic or outline form to help them grasp the main ideas of the passage and prepare them for what they will be reading?
- What are the most important, high-utility words that all students must know and understand from the passage? How will I teach them those words? Also, what will I do during the reading of the passage to link this instruction to the text?
- What can I do to get students interested in reading the text?
- What will I do to help students establish a purpose for reading the text?

a. Scaffolding

Frontloading is providing specific scaffolding so students will be successful. It has been found that “scaffolding is especially important in language classrooms, as negotiation of meaning and linguistic assistance are crucial to student’s language development” (Kayi-Aydar, 2013, p. 324). Experience suggests that scaffolding allows students to handle much harder academic content than without, which provides English as additional language students “the literary experience of their monolingual peers” (Ludhra & Jones, 2008). Coleman and Goldenberg (2010) also identified scaffolding as “critical” for English learners and believe that carefully planned lessons allow students to use increasingly complex responses with the support of the teacher acting as facilitator.

Conclusion

First Nations and Métis students are EAL learners even if they speak English and should be designated as such. Understanding First Nations and Métis culture and being sensitive to dialectical differences of language helps the teacher understand the need for explicit teaching of academic language and well as Standard English in school. We found the use of visuals of their home communities helpful in engaging students in the interview as it was a familiar context to them. As a result, we are better able to accurately assess their language. Also, using anchor charts in the classroom provides a ready reference for students who only need to glance at the wall to help them

remember certain language structures. Hattie (2013) suggests make student visible learning as what works best in raising student achievement. We found that anchor charts describing academic language as very helpful for our students. We also felt the sentence stems were helpful in providing a consistent language structure that is easily accessible in a chart.

We would like to thank the Ministry for the opportunity to more closely study and find helpful ways to meet the needs of our students. We have a deeper understanding of being culturally sensitive and being able to more accurately assess and monitor language growth.

References

- Argüelles, María Elena (2014). Vocabulary instruction and language development for ELL learners. Online at: <http://www.okvision2020.ok.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Thursday-1100-Meeting-the-needs-of-English-Language-Learners.pdf> .
- Coleman, R., & Goldenberg, C. (2010). What does research say about effective practices for English learners? Part three: promoting literacy development. *Kappa Delta Pi Record: ProQuest Education Journals, Spring 2010*, 106-111.
- Epstein, R. I., & Xu, L. X. J. (2003). Roots and Wings: Teaching English as a Second Dialect to Aboriginal Students, A Review of the Literature. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan
- Flynn, N. (2007). Good practice for pupils learning English as an additional language: lessons from effective teachers in inner-city primary schools. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 177-198.
- Florey, Kitty B. (2008). A picture of language. *American Educator, Summer 2008*, 40 – 45.
- Goldenberg, C. (2008). Teaching English language learners: what the research does-and does not say. *American Educator, Summer 2008*, 8 - 23.
- Goldenberg, C. (2012). Unlocking the research on English learners: what we know- and don't yet know- about effective instruction. *American Educator, Summer 2013*, 4-11.
- Goulet, L. & Goulet, K. (2014). *Teaching Each Other: Nehinew Concepts & Indigenous Pedagogies*. Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press.
- Kayi-Aydar, H. (2013). Scaffolding language learning in an academic ESL classroom. *ELT Journal Volume 67/3*, 324-335.
- Ludhra, G., & Jones, D. (2008). Conveying the “right” kind of message: Planning for the first language and culture within the primary classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal, Volume 32*, 391-395.

- Ranney, S. (2012). Defining and teaching academic language: developments in K-12 ESL. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 6/9, 560-574.
- Saunders, W., Goldenberg, C., & Marcelletti, D. (2013). English language development: guidelines for instruction. *American Educator*, Summer 2013, 13-25.
- Schleppegrell, M. (2013). The role of metalanguage in supporting academic language development. *Language Learning: A Journal of Research in Language Studies*, Volume 63, 153-170.
- Sibold, C. (2011). Building English language learners' academic vocabulary: strategies and tips. *Multicultural Education*, Volume 18, 24-28.
- Tompkins, G. (1998). *Language Arts: Content and Teaching Strategies* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Verdugo, R., & Flores, B. (2007). English-language learners: key issues. *Education and Urban Society* 39:167,167-193
- Ward, A. *Classroom Conversations: Talking and Learning in Elementary School*. Toronto: ITP Nelson.
- Wilhelm, J., Wilhelm, P. & Boas E. (2009). *Inquiring minds learn to read and write*. Markham, Ontario: Rubicon Publishing, p. 56 & 57.
- Wiltse, L. (2011), "But my students all speak English": ethical research issues of Aboriginal English. *TESL Canada Journal*, 28(15), 53-62.

Appendix A - Sample of Pictures Used With Students

Black Lake



<http://sain.scaa.sk.ca/items/index.php/black-lake-community;rad>

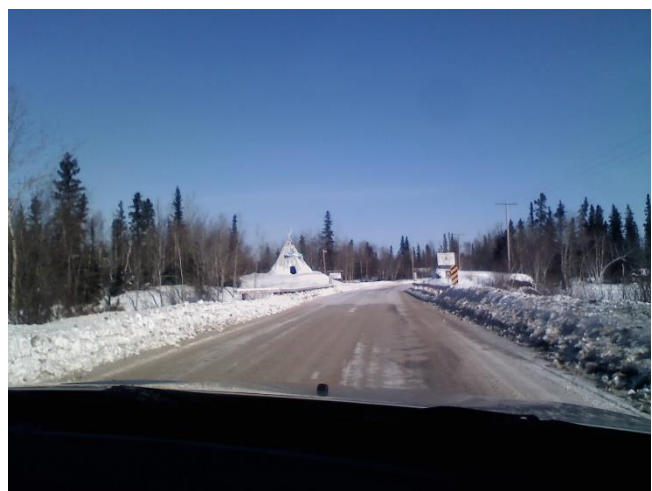


<http://www.eamp.com/blacklake.html>

Pelican Narrows



<http://www.arcticcircle.ca/Sask/pelican/P6236716>.



JPG<http://www.panoramio.com/photo/6773666>

Southend



<http://www.arcticcircle.ca/Sask/southend/P7076987.JPG>



<http://www.arcticcircle.ca/Sask/southend/P7086994.JPG>

Appendix B - Revised Interview



Prince Albert Catholic Schools English as an Additional Language Interview

Interview Guidelines:

The oral interview below includes questions requiring one-word responses or more open-ended responses. The purpose of the questions is to encourage the student to speak. Not all questions need to be asked as they are prompts for encouraging the student to talk. The accompanying pictures may also be used as prompts for students.

1. What is your name? _____

2. Have you always lived in Prince Albert? _____

a. Where else have you lived? _____

b. Is there a reserve that you belong to/visit? _____

c. Tell me about some of the things you like to do there? _____

d. Who do you visit while you are there? _____

e. How do you get to the reserve? _____

3. Are you new to this school? _____

a. Did you start Kindergarten here? _____

CFR Speaking: The EAL student can:

A1.1 – A1.2

- Answer single questions using single words or short phrases.
- Share personal information.
- Imitate some English stress and intonation patterns
- Speak with sufficient clarity for teacher comprehension.

A2.1 – A2.2

- Participate in social discussions using short sentences
- Request clarification when necessary
- Ask questions
- Recount familiar events, stories and key information.
- Express personal opinions and emotions.
- Speak with sufficient clarity and accuracy for listener and comprehension
- Speak at almost the pace of first-language speakers showing some control of stress, timing and rhythm

B1.1 – B1.2

- Initiate and maintain conversations
- Speak with clear pronunciation and enunciation
- Use conversational strategies such as acknowledgement, reply, agreement, and disagreement
- Begin to self-correct simple grammatical errors
- Use voice to indicate emphasis through pacing, volume intonation, and stress

B2+

- Use most language structures appropriate to the grade level
- Speak with fluency and clarity
- Self-correct common grammatical errors
- Use Idiomatic and colloquial language appropriately

4. Tell me about your school/class? _____

5. Tell me what you do after school? _____

6. When you are not at school, tell me what you like to do? _____

a. Do you play a sport? _____

b. Do you play a musical instrument? _____

7. Tell me about something you like to do? _____

8. Tell me about your family.

a. Who lives at your house? _____

b. How many brothers and sisters? _____

c. What do you enjoy doing with your family? _____

9. Do you know how to speak Dene/Cree? _____

10. Do you understand when someone speaks Dene/Cree to you? _____

11. What language do you speak at home? _____

CFR Speaking: The EAL student can:

A1.1 – A1.2

- Answer single questions using single words or short phrases.
- Share personal information.
- Imitate some English stress and intonation patterns
- Speak with sufficient clarity for teacher comprehension.

A2.1 – A2.2

- Participate in social discussions using short sentences
- Request clarification when necessary
- Ask questions
- Recount familiar events, stories and key information.
- Express personal opinions and emotions.
- Speak with sufficient clarity and accuracy for listener and comprehension
- Speak at almost the pace of first-language speakers showing some control of stress, timing and rhythm

B1.1 – B1.2

- Initiate and maintain conversations
- Speak with clear pronunciation and enunciation
- Use conversational strategies such as acknowledgement, reply, agreement, and disagreement
- Begin to self-correct simple grammatical errors
- Use voice to indicate emphasis through pacing, volume intonation, and stress

B2+

- Use most language structures appropriate to the grade level
- Speak with fluency and clarity
- Self-correct common grammatical errors
- Use Idiomatic and colloquial language appropriately

12. What is different between where you used to live(reserve) and Prince Albert? _____

Appendix C Strategies for EAL Learners: What Works for Our Students

1. Speak clearly, articulate properly, and slow speech (slightly); voice modulation. Don't talk while your back is turned to the class.
2. Have a routine that alerts students when giving instructions.
 - "Eyes on me!"
 - Use (visual cues), pictures, physical gestures
3. Control use of idioms
4. Use photos, maps, illustrations and real objects in oral discussions in context.
5. Use picture sorts to compare
 - E.g., reserve, city, country
6. Recasting (activity) where teacher recasts or restates students' grammar structure correctly.
7. Use sentence frames (be consistent with the vocabulary you are teaching)

Sentence Frames Girard, 2003

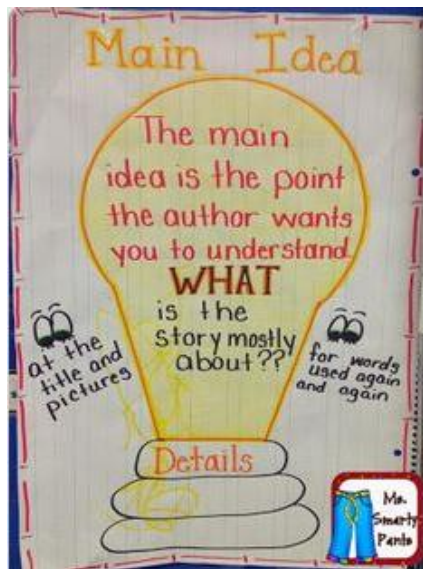
- I found out that . . .
 - I learned/ heard/ discovered . . .
 - I was surprised that . . .
 - I now realize
 - In my opinion . . .
 - I think . . .
 - _____ emphasized that . .
 - It seems to me that . . .
 - I agree with _____ that . . .
 - I believe/imagine/predict
 - I concluded/deduced/ suspected/speculated
 - As _____ already pointed out, I think that ...
 - I want to find out more about/I am beginning to wonder if ...
 - _____ told me/explained to me/mentioned/shared
 - After much consideration, I/we concluded that...
8. Roleplay, use puppets, storybags, props
 9. Scaffolding
 10. Give a purpose for the learning
 - E.g., My pupose in teaching you this is

Strategies for Building Vocabulary

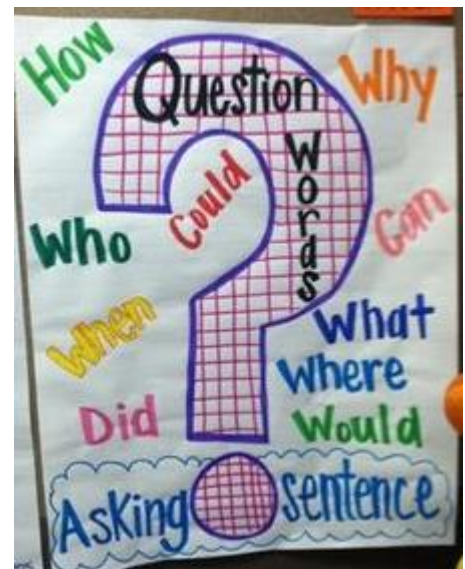
- Proper articulation, proper modelling, using high quality oral language.
- Using precise/content/academic language
- Label pictures
- Uses visuals, pictures, charts
- Graphic organizers or word web; recycle word chart where students could rename the word in their own language.
- Using anchor charts



www.pinterest.com/pin/450430400202310030



www.pinterest.com/pin/287597126180839716



pinterest.com/pin/552042866797695496

Verb Tense Examples		
Past ←	Present	→ Future
Simple Past	Simple Present	Simple Future
Last year, I studied English in England.	I study English every day.	I am going to study English next year.
Past Progressive	Present Progressive	Future Progressive
I was studying English when you called yesterday.	I am studying English now.	I will be studying English tomorrow.
Past Perfect	Present Perfect	Future Perfect
I had studied English a little before I moved to Australia.	I have studied English in several different schools.	I will have studied English for four hours if I study for another hour.
Past Perfect Progressive	Present Perfect Progressive	Future Perfect Progressive
I had been studying English for three years before I moved to New Zealand.	I have been studying English for two years.	I will have been studying English for over two hours by the time you arrive.

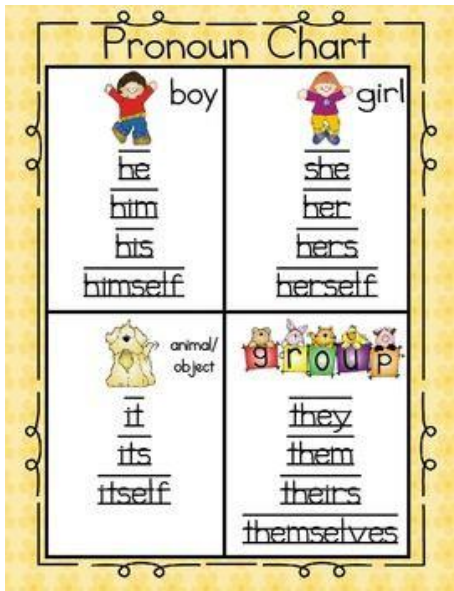
<http://thecrazyteacher.altervista.org/2014/01/page/2/>

Pronoun Chart					
	Subject Pronouns	Object Pronouns	Possessive Adjectives	Possessive Pronouns	Reflexive Pronouns
1st person	I	me	my	mine	myself
2nd person	you	you	your	yours	yourself
3rd person (male)	he	him	his	his	himself
3rd person (female)	she	her	her	hers	herself
3rd person	it	it	its	(not used)	itself
1st person (plural)	we	us	our	ours	ourselves
2nd person (plural)	you	you	your	yours	yourselves
3rd person (plural)	they	them	their	theirs	themselves

<http://mrswarnerarlington.weebly.com/pronouns.html>

Grammar Strategies

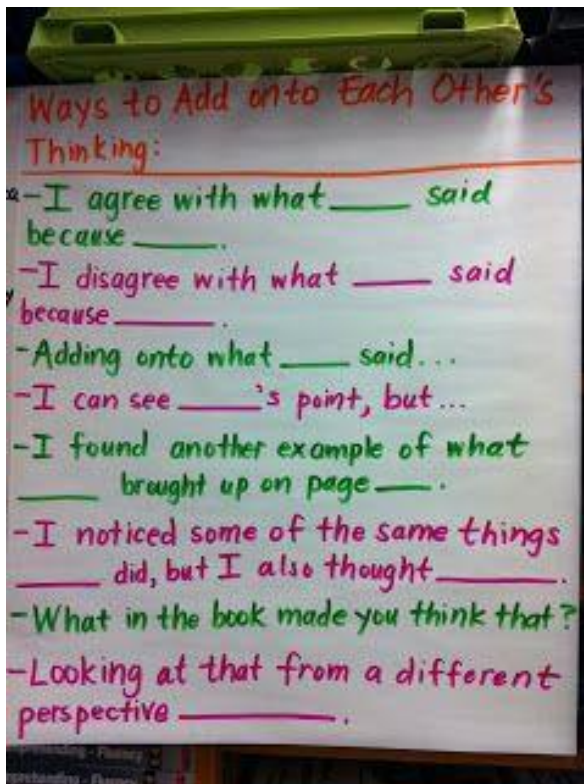
Many students have different grammatical structures in their first language even if the first language is English. But, there is an “echo of their aboriginal culture and language practices.



www.pinterest.com/pin/157837161914524646

- Don't correct student's speech – affirm their culture and build the English standard spoken. For example, If a First Nations or Métis student uses pronouns incorrectly, that is because in their own language, pronouns are non-existent. Anchor charts help to provide a stationary reference chart in the classroom for the students.

- Use of sentence frames.



<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/547820742143865643>

- Frontloading strategies

When designing frontloading activities, think about....
How does your activity activate and build the students' prior knowledge or background information regarding your inquiry?
How does the activity work to motivate students for reading and inquiry regarding the theme?
How will the frontloading activity work to organize inquiry, set purposes, and consolidate learning about the theme throughout the unit of study. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How will it help students set purposes for their reading• Focus their learning,• Clarify what they are coming to know• Help them to monitor their learning progress