

City of Edinburgh EAL Service

Guidelines for using the EAL (English as an Additional Language) Profile of Competence

Introduction

The EAL (English as an Additional Language) Profile of Competence links the stages of English language acquisition (ScotXEd 1-5), with broad age bands associated with the levels of Curriculum for Excellence. For this purpose the age bands are separated into lower primary (P1-P4), upper primary (P5-P7) and secondary. The Profile gives a detailed description of the skills and competencies associated with stages of additional language acquisition across the 3 lines of development of language as described in Curriculum for Excellence, namely Listening and Talking, Reading and Writing.

The acquisition of English as an additional language is a developmental process and as such the division of stages cannot be exact. Initial advice from the Scottish Executive was to assign stages on a best-fit basis. The attached Profile has been designed to assist with this process of initial and ongoing assessment. It is intended for use by class, subject and support teachers to help them systematically and consistently assess the receptive and expressive language skills of bilingual pupils and assign an appropriate stage of English (1-5) to describe these skills. It can also be used to monitor and plan for the continued progress of bilingual pupils through the Stages of English.

While the Profile has been designed to monitor and track the progress of English language acquisition, it does not reflect the achievements and competencies of pupils in the other languages they use. Bilingual learners come from a wide variety of language and literacy backgrounds and vary in the level of literacy skills they have in their home language(s), as well as their experience of learning English.

Timescales and learner variables

Research shows that progression from stage 1 (new to English) to stage 5 (social and academic fluency level) can take from 5 to 10 years. The rate of progression is dependent on a range of factors including pupil motivation, age, level of competence in first (and other) languages, previous educational experience, general cognitive ability, personality and home educational values and support. In addition, progress is dependent on the school ethos, the knowledge and expertise of the staff in relation to the use of effective strategies of support and the maintenance of high expectations of pupil progress. Progress is also influenced by the pupil's entry point to the Scottish school system.

As an approximate guide, a bilingual pupil who has no inherent learning difficulty or trauma may take approximately 6 - 18 months to pass through stage 1, 6 – 18 months to pass through stage 2, 2 – 3+ years to pass through stage 3, and similarly 2 - 3+ years for stage 4. It is usual, therefore, for pupils to work within a stage for several years. It is also common for a newly arrived pupil to pass through a 'silent period', which may last for 6+ months.

Using the Profile

An EAL Profile of Competence recording sheet exists for each line of development of language at each age band and stage of English. Copies of the relevant recording sheet should be made for each pupil at stages 1 to 4 who is learning through English as an additional language. It is recommended that profiles are updated at least twice each year at a liaison meeting between the EAL teacher and class or subject/support teacher. The timing of this process should be arranged to coincide with other school ASL planning processes. Progress should be monitored on the basis of observations and formative assessments made of the pupil's language development. The Profile is to be passed on to the next class teacher as the pupil moves through Primary, then passed on to the Secondary school at transition.

Planning Support

Knowledge of the stages of English language acquisition (1-5) and effective strategies of support is vital when planning for the development of both language and cognitive skills of bilingual pupils within any lesson. Being aware of a bilingual pupil's current language skills and language development targets will facilitate effective planning for the teaching of vocabulary items and language structures necessary for the pupil to access a lesson and engage with learning outcomes and experiences.

The final column on each profile sheet lists a range of appropriate strategies of support for bilingual pupils at each stage of English language acquisition and within each line of development of language. EAL teachers can assist class/subject teachers in identifying and implementing the relevant language support required for a lesson.

This profile of competence will therefore assist schools in:

- Identifying the stage of English language acquisition of a bilingual learner
- Monitoring and tracking the progress of a bilingual learner through the stages of English
- Setting targets for English language development
- Implementing appropriate teaching strategies
- Scaffolding activities according to language needs
- Planning activities which support language development alongside content learning
- Building an awareness among staff of the process of English language acquisition
- Illustrating a pupil's language progress to parents
- Identifying 'plateauing' of progress
- Highlighting the possibility of other additional support for learning needs for pupils who may for example have learning difficulties (if progress is slower than would be expected) or be gifted and talented (if progress is unusually rapid)
- Providing a system for transferring information on language development to the pupil's next teachers
- Encouraging pupil self assessment

Professional development opportunities for individuals and groups of staff on the use of the EAL Profiles of Competence and the stages of English are available via the EAL Service. For further advice please speak to an EAL teacher or contact the EAL Service on 0131-469-2890.