

Alberta Routes

New EAL Practitioner Handbook



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

Project Supervisor: Alana Johnson

Developed By: Tyla Olsen

Thanks to Norquest Staff, CALP staff, and others who contributed to this project with their knowledge and expertise. Special thanks to:

Barb Scully

Barbara Moore

Gina Deitz

Odette Lloyd

Lindsay Carton

Brad Simpson

**FUNDING FOR THIS PROJECT WAS PROVIDED BY
ALBERTA ADVANCED EDUCATION**

©NORQUEST COLLEGE, 2024

NORQUEST COLLEGE HAS MADE EVERY EFFORT TO OBTAIN COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS. PLEASE BRING ANY OMISSIONS TO OUR ATTENTION BY CONTACTING THE COLLEGE.

Table of Contents

Alberta Routes.....	1
Table of Contents	5
Part 1: Introduction.....	7
A Letter to You.....	9
Introduction	10
Part 2: Coordinating EAL Programs	11
EAL Programming in Alberta.....	13
EAL in the Community Adult Learning Program	15
Connecting with the Community	18
Learner Intake.....	21
Staff and Volunteer Development.....	34
Part 3: Planning Programs and Lessons.....	36
Planning Language Programs	39
Planning Lessons.....	58
Planning Lessons for Tutoring	70
Planning Multi-Level Lessons	72
Selecting EAL Materials	74
Part 4: Facilitating EAL Classes	79
Best Practices for Language Teaching	82
Intercultural Communicative Competence in EAL Learning Environments ...	92
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the EAL Classroom.....	96
Part 5: Continuing Your Learning.....	100
Setting Professional Development Goals	102
Resources for Further Exploration	106
References	108
Images	111



Part 1: Introduction

A Letter to You

Dear new practitioner,

Welcome to a new world! A world where you get to impact lives. Where you get to help carve a pathway for those new to Canada to walk on – a path of growth and responsibility. It will be a challenging task, but an incredibly fulfilling one. Congratulations on arriving here.

You may be feeling overwhelmed by everything there is to learn and do right now. There are endless acronyms that you have never seen before. Many meetings and webinars to attend. So many books on the shelf that you have no clue where to start. I'll tell you where – right here.

As you go through the pages of this book, your mental to-do list will probably start to grow. You will begin to imagine all the training you will take to master each of these topics. Please remember this cheesy but true proverb: *A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.* You **do not** need to know everything right away. You don't even need to know it all soon. All you need to do, is start with page one.

Also remember that you are not alone. We at Alberta Routes are here to help you with every step of this journey. If things get overwhelming, just reach out for help. We are excited to walk with you as you grow into your role and help you plan what to learn next.

You've got this. We're rooting for you.

The Alberta Routes Team

Introduction

The Resource

Welcome to the Alberta Routes New EAL Practitioner Handbook. This resource will introduce you and your team to the concepts and knowledge areas that EAL coordinators and facilitators need to master to be successful in their roles.

The information in this handbook is abbreviated. It has not been designed to be all-encompassing. After each topic is introduced, links to more information and additional learning materials will be provided. These do not need to be used right away. Feel free to access them when you feel confident in your foundational knowledge.

The resource is divided into 5 sections:

1. Introduction
2. Coordinating EAL Programs
3. Planning Programs and Lessons
4. Facilitating EAL Classes
5. Additional Resources

Depending on the structure of your organization, you may or may not need to read all the sections. Feel free to skip chapters that do not speak to your role or context.

Common Acronyms

The following acronyms will be used throughout the resource. They will be defined at first use, but please familiarize yourself with them before moving on to the next section.

EAL – English as an Additional Language

CLB – Canadian Language Benchmarks

CALP – Community Adult Learning Program

ATESL – Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language

You can use the ELL Acronyms for the Uninitiated [tip sheet](#) as a translator as you move forward in this resource.



Part 2: Coordinating EAL Programs

EAL Programming in Alberta

When you think of an English as an Additional Language (EAL) class, what do you picture in your mind? These questions might help you create the picture:

- How many learners are in the class?
- Where is the class held?
- Did the learners pay to attend the class?
- How experienced is the facilitator?
- Are the learners using technology in the classroom?

Each question could have a completely different answer, and each answer is one piece of the puzzle that helps us picture what EAL programs look like.

The reality is, there are many types of EAL programs in Alberta. Each type of program looks completely different than the others. This is because each program has a different combination of answers to the questions above. What EAL means and what it looks like changes depending on the context.

The following pages will give you a snapshot of the types of EAL programs that exist in Alberta. They will focus on your context – the Community Adult Learning Program.

EAL Program Funding in Alberta

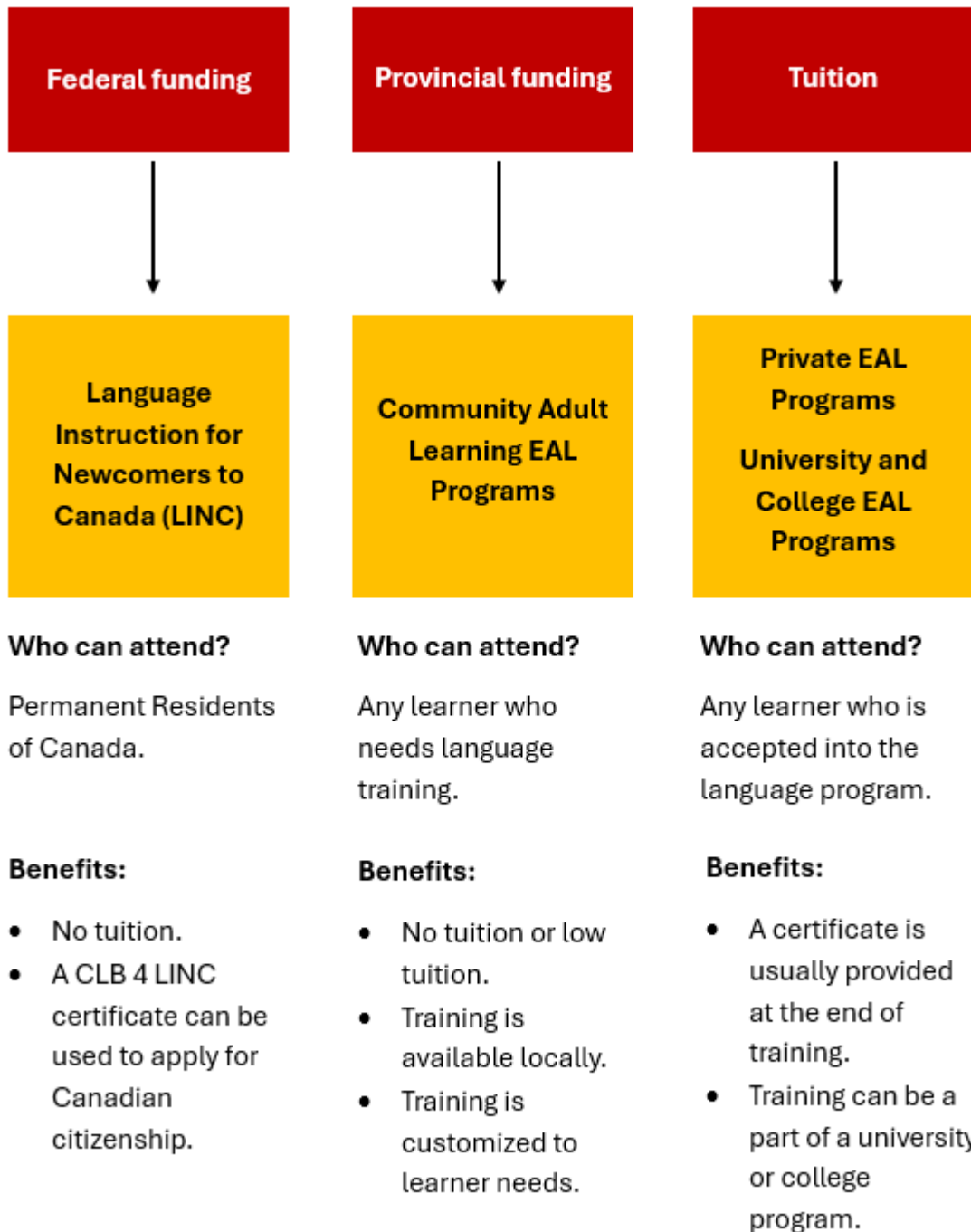
The Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta, and newcomers to Canada all agree about one thing: newcomers to Canada whose language is not English or French need language training to be able to fully participate in Canadian life. English language programs exist to meet that need.

Running English language programs is an expensive task. Millions of dollars in funding is required to make these programs run and give newcomers access to them. There are several ways that EAL programs can be funded. The three most common are:

- Federal funding
- Provincial funding
- Tuition (the learner pays)

Each type of funding exists for different types of programming.

EAL Funding Diagram



EAL in the Community Adult Learning Program

The Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) receives provincial funding to provide adults with the training they need to participate in many areas of life in Alberta. This includes English language training.

Provincial funding is given to adult learning centres across Alberta. A list of these centres can be found on the [CALP Portal](#). There are many types of English language programs that CALPs can run. The type of programs they choose depend on:

- How many learners request training
- Whether learners have similar goals or not
- The availability of facilitators and tutors
- Learners' daily schedules

Tutoring

One-on-one tutoring is a very common language training model in Alberta. It is particularly popular in rural areas where there are not enough learners available at the same time to run a group class. Tutoring programs are often run by a coordinator and facilitated by volunteer tutors. These programs require the coordinator to train and provide professional development for tutors.

Alberta Routes provides ESL Tutor Training as a webinar or in-person workshop. Registration for this training is available on the [Alberta Routes website](#).

Another resource for tutor development is the [Alberta Routes ESL Tutor Handbook](#). This handbook provides background information, strategies, and starter lesson plans for new tutors.

Alberta Routes also provides mentorship. Please [reach out to your advisor](#) to discuss in-person training or one-on-one mentorship.

Group Classes

Group language classes are offered when there are enough learners with similar goals and who are available at the same time. They can take a variety of forms and focus on a variety of topics.

Conversation Classes

Conversation classes provide opportunities for learners who want to improve their speaking skills to do so. These classes are often unstructured and casual. The facilitators' role is to keep the conversation going and answer questions that arise from the conversation.

Test Preparation Classes

There are a variety of high-stakes tests that language learners can take to prove their language ability. Many learners will attempt these tests in preparation for citizenship or university application. These tests include:

- [IELTS](#)
- [CELP](#)
- [Pearson](#)

Community adult learning programs can offer group classes that prepare learners to write these tests.

Workplace Language Classes

Classes focusing on language for the workplace are becoming more and more common. These classes can focus on transferrable skills and language that are common in many jobs or can focus on vocabulary and tasks for a specific workplace.

Community Adult Learning Programs can partner with companies or organizations to provide language training for their staff.

Settlement Language Classes

Settlement language helps learners participate in day-to-day life. Settlement topics include English for:

- The healthcare system
- Transportation
- The grocery store

Settlement classes teach language for everyday situations and practice that language in context whenever possible. They can include field trips to give learners authentic practice.

Citizenship Preparation Classes

These classes prepare learners to pass the Canadian citizenship test. Citizenship preparation classes are not language focused. However, learners may need language (especially vocabulary) support to read the citizenship study guide and learn the information they will need to recall during the test.

EAL Family Literacy Classes

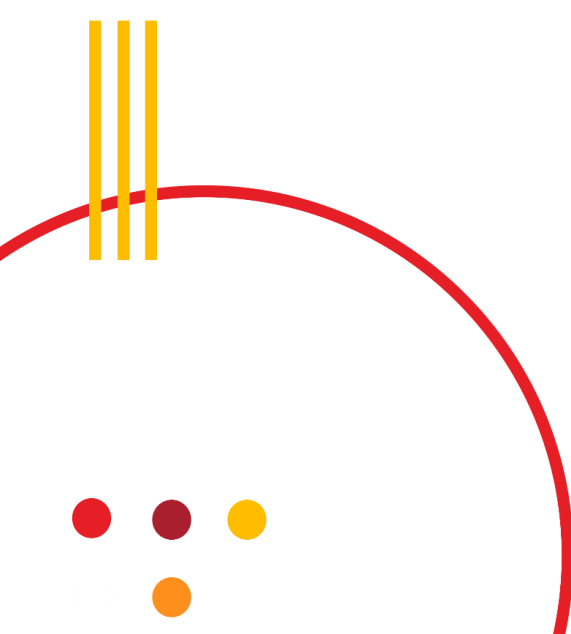
Family literacy classes are designed to help newcomers learn English alongside their kids. These programs are excellent for learners who have trouble accessing childcare. Children's reading materials are often used in these classes to help adults practice reading in English.

Online Programming

CALPs are beginning to offer online programming to better reach learners in rural areas or who have schedules that are difficult to accommodate. These programs can use online video conferencing tools like:

- Zoom
- Microsoft Teams
- Google Meet

Online classes can also use tools like Google classroom to post assignments and share files.



Connecting with the Community

Community Needs Assessment¹

The first step you may need to take as a new EAL coordinator is understanding the language training needs of your community. This may be the role of the organization's executive director, so ensure you have clarified this before beginning the process.

These are the steps you can take to perform a community needs assessment:

1. Identify stakeholders

Stakeholders are people or organizations that have something to gain from language training. They can include:

- Newcomers to Canada
- Organizations that support newcomers to Canada
- Businesses that employ newcomers to Canada
- Local government advisors
- Interested community members

When you are planning your needs assessment, it will be important to make a list of stakeholders that you want to participate.

2. Choose a method of needs assessment

Once you have made a list of stakeholders who might be able to help you with your needs assessment, you can decide how you will hear from them. Needs assessment methods include:

- Questionnaires
- Telephone interviews
- Face-to-face interviews
- Focus groups

You can use one method or a combination of methods to complete your needs assessment.

¹ Adapted from: Alberta Routes, Starting or Inheriting an ESL Program

3. Create the needs assessment tool

The next step is to design your needs assessment tool. You should create questions and discussion topics that give you the following information:

- What are the demographics of the newcomer population in your community?
- What supports already exist for newcomers in your community?
- What obstacles are newcomers in the community currently facing?
- What types of training would best help newcomers in your community overcome the obstacles they are facing?
- What are the best ways to connect with the newcomer population in your community?

Instead of creating your own, you may wish to use or adapt an existing tool for your context. As long as the questions are appropriate for your context, this can work well.

4. Raise awareness about the needs assessment

Invite everyone on your stakeholder list to participate in the needs assessment. This might involve setting a date, time, and location for a focus group or scheduling times for individual interviews.

If you want to invite anyone in the community who is interested in the topic, you can advertise your needs assessment on social media or in local newspapers or bulletins.

5. Collect, compile, analyze and distribute the results

Once you have conducted your needs assessment, you need to analyze the information you collected. You should look for common patterns and answers to the questions. The patterns you find should help you decide what types of programs you should plan to offer.

It is a good idea to send a report of your findings to everyone who participated and thank them for helping you with the process.

For more information about conducting a community needs assessment, you can consult [Assessing Learning Needs: Data Collection Guide](#), [The Community Learning Needs Assessment Toolkit](#), The Alberta Routes Needs Assessment [tip](#)

[sheet](#), or host the Alberta Routes workshop on Starting or Inheriting an ESL Program

Cultivating Key Partnerships

To establish or sustain a successful EAL program, you will need to maintain relationships with the stakeholders that supported your needs assessment. Creating partnerships with these community partners will help you:

- Advertise your programs
- Increase the likelihood of referrals (to and outside of your organization)
- Find additional supports (financial, mental health, etc.) for your learners
- Fundraise additional financial support
- Increase the visibility of your organization

Creating and maintaining these relationships will take some effort. It will be important to schedule time to connect with the community. Intentionally putting this on your calendar will ensure that these key relationships do not fall by the wayside.

You can connect with the community and stakeholders by:

- Scheduling coffee or lunch meetings
- Attending local council or chamber of commerce meetings
- Attending community events
- Collaborating with other organizations on programs

Increasing Your Visibility

For your EAL program to be successful, you will need to make sure that potential learners know what classes and learning opportunities you are offering.

There are many strategies you can use to increase your program's visibility in your community. These include:

- Advertising on social media
- Creating a newsletter that is sent to all current and former learners
- Publishing advertisements in local newspapers and bulletins
- Hanging posters around the community
- Asking other organizations to display brochures for your programs
- Attending community events

- Asking current learners to tell their friends about programs
- Hosting newcomer-focused events in your building

Learner Intake

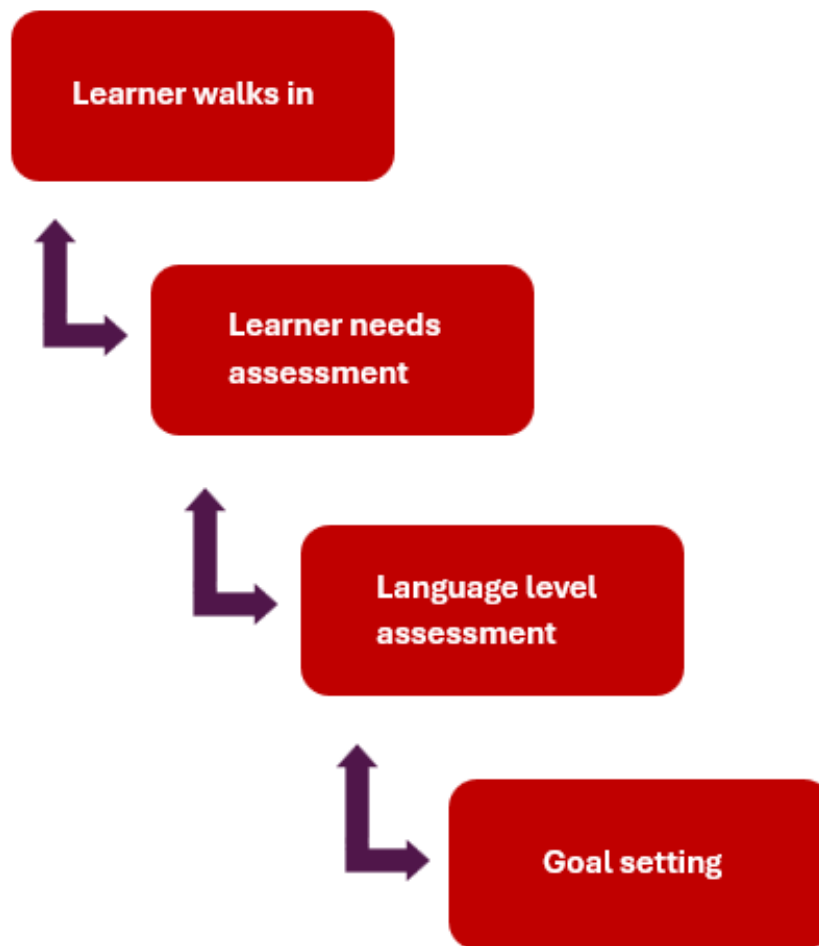
Picture this scenario:

A learner walks into your office from the street. They tell you that they want to improve their English.

What do you do first?

It is important for EAL program coordinators to have an established process when a learner asks for help. When your intake procedure is clear, you will be prepared when new learners walk through the door.

Example Intake Procedure



The Intake Meeting

To complete a full learner intake that includes needs assessment, language level assessment, and goal setting, you will need to set aside a good amount of time. Booking enough time to complete a thorough intake with a learner will ensure that you are well-prepared and confident during the process. Depending on how thorough your language assessment tools are, it will probably take 1.5-2 hours to complete the process:

Needs assessment: 30 minutes

Language level assessment: 30 minutes – 4 hours (depending on the assessment tool used)

Goal setting: 30 minutes

You can choose to complete the needs assessment interview separately from the other steps or do them all at once. The benefit of separating them is that at times, a learner's needs will be best met by another organization. In these situations, the next step would be referring the learner to the organization that can best meet their needs rather than completing the language level assessment and goal setting.

Learner Needs Assessment²

The best way to determine a learner's needs is to ask questions that help them identify why they need to learn English and what they need to use English for. Learning about your learner's background is also helpful when choosing resources and activities. Some questions you may ask are:

- What can you already do in English?
- What challenges do you have when communicating in English?
- Where do you need to use English?
- What kinds of things do you need to listen to, read, write, and talk about in English?
- What topics do you need to learn about (i.e., banking, shopping, employment, safety, law, citizenship, health, school system, weather, etc.)?
- What is your overall experience with education in your home community?
- What type of job do you want to have?

Example Needs Assessment Tool

Instructions: Ask the learner the following questions. Take notes on their response. If they are having trouble answering, provide examples or reframe the question.

1. What can you already do in English?

² Adapted from: Alberta Routes, *Needs Assessment Tipsheet*

2. What challenges do you have when communicating in English?

3. Where do you need to use English?

4. What kinds of things do you need to listen to, read, write, and talk about in English?

5. What topics do you need to learn about (i.e., banking, shopping, employment, safety, law, citizenship, health, school system, weather, etc.)?

6. What is your overall experience with education in your home community?

7. What type of job do you want to have?

8. What type of jobs have you had?

9. What are your interests and hobbies?

Where to Learn More

To learn more about learner needs assessment, please reference [Assessing Learning Needs: Data Collection Guide](#) and the Alberta Routes Needs Assessment [tip sheet](#).

To learn more about needs assessment in the tutoring context, please reference the [Alberta Routes ESL Tutor Handbook](#).

For thorough checklist-style needs assessment examples, please reference the pre-unit checklists in the [Roots and Connections Toolkit](#).

Language Level Assessment

Before you can help a learner improve their language skills, you need to know where they are beginning. Language level assessments provide a picture of what learners can do well and areas for improvement.

The Canadian Language Benchmarks

The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLBs) are Canada's most widely used tool for assessing language ability and planning language programming.

The CLBs divide language ability into four separate skills:

Listening



Speaking



Reading



Writing



(CCLB, 2012)

Each skill has 12 levels of ability. These 12 levels are grouped into 3 stages:

- Stage I: Basic Language Ability (Levels 1-4)
- Stage II: Intermediate Language Ability (Levels 5-8)
- Stage III: Advanced Language Ability (Levels 9-12)

Each skill and level of the CLBs has a detailed description of what learners can do with the skill at each level.

These are examples from CLB 1 and 5 Listening:

CLB 1

Profile of Ability

The listener can:

Understand a very limited number of common individual words, simple phrases and routine courtesy formulas related to immediate personal needs.

CLB 5

Profile of Ability

The listener can:

Understand, with some effort, the gist of moderately complex, concrete formal and informal communication.

(CCLB, 2012)

The CLB document has much more detail about what CLB 1 and 5 learners can do with their listening skills, but the above statements provide a general picture. Reference the Alberta Routes CLB [tip sheet](#) for more information.

Using the CLBs for Placement

CLB Online Self-Assessment

[The CLB Online Self-Assessment \(OSA\)](#) is a free online tool for assessing learners' language skills. It is a good choice when:

- The learner has sufficient digital skills to take the assessment.
- The learner has several hours to dedicate to the assessment.
- The learner has access to a computer, headset, and quiet environment.

The results of this assessment are not official. They are useful for determining a learners' starting point in a reading and listening.

Language Testing Centres

Some learners may qualify for an official CLB assessment. These are available in Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary.

[Language Assessment, Referral, and Counselling Centre \(LARCC\)](#), Edmonton

[Care for Newcomers](#), Red Deer

[Immigrant Services Calgary](#), Calgary

Alberta Routes Placement Tests

Alberta Routes has a suite of CLB-aligned assessments for EAL programs. To access these assessment tools, please consult your Alberta Routes regional advisor.

CLB Can Do Statements

Once learners have been accurately assessed and assigned a CLB level, you can use the CLB Can Do Statements to explain the meaning of their results. It is important for learners to be able to understand and articulate their current level of language so they understand what they need to do in order to make progress. They can do this by comparing their current level to the next one. Doing this will help them create helpful and informed language learning goals.

Take a look at the next page to see an example from the CLB Can Do Statements:

This is an example of what the Can Do Statements look like:

Canadian Language Benchmarks
Can Do Statements

Listening **1**

At this Benchmark, I can:



- understand a few words and very simple phrases
- understand common polite phrases

When:

- I can see the person
- the person speaks slowly and helps me understand
- the person uses pictures or gestures
- the person speaks about things I know or need

■ Understand very simple greetings and introductions.

■ Understand very simple requests.



(CCLB, 2013)

Other Language Assessment Tools

In Canada, most language assessment tools have been abandoned in favour of ones that measure skills using the CLB. Alberta Routes does have the [Roots and Connections Toolkit](#) page 7, which is an informal checklist-style assessment.

Goal Setting

SMART Goals

Before learners are placed in a program or with a tutor, it is important to answer these questions: *What does the learner want to accomplish using English? What are the learner's goals?*

Setting goals will give learners direction. Goals can also make clearer to learners what steps they will need to take.

When you are helping learners set goals, remember to check that they are SMART goals:

S	Specific	The goal must specify exactly what the learner wants to accomplish or be able to do.
M	Measurable	It must be obvious when the goal has been accomplished or completed.
A	Attainable	The goal must be realistic for the learner.
R	Relevant	The goal must connect to the learner's future goals and aspirations.
T	Time-bound	The goal must have a completion date.

Goal Setting Tool

Instructions: Have learners set three goals. Have them complete the checklist to make sure they fit the SMART goal framework.

My three-month goal:

Is this goal:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

My six-month goal:

Is this goal:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

My one-year goal:

Is this goal:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

Placement or Referral

After you have completed each step of the intake process you can either:

- Place the learner in a program/class or with a tutor
- Refer the learner to another organization that could better meet their needs

There are times when a CALP might not be the best place for the learner to pursue their goals. In this situation, it will be important to refer the learner to an organization that can meet their needs. The learner and their goals must be the priority when making this decision.

When you maintain relationships with other community service providers, you will be more likely to see opportunities to refer learners to other services they would benefit from in addition to language training. These might include:

- Income assistance
- Employment counselling
- Mental health services
- Volunteer opportunities

Staff and Volunteer Development

An important aspect of coordinating a successful English language program is hiring and developing staff and/or volunteers. Some coordinators may decide to facilitate programs themselves, but many do not. These coordinators will need to support their hired staff and volunteers as they develop the skills and understanding required to help learners reach their goals.

Staff Development

Many English language programs (especially those in rural areas) do not have access to a wide pool of highly trained facilitators. Many will need to hire adaptable individuals who are enthusiastic about developing the skills to be great facilitators.

Staff Assessment

To create a training plan for facilitators, it will be important to determine where they are starting.

A helpful self-assessment tool for facilitation skills is the [Skills for Success Self-Assessment Tool](#). Although this assessment is meant to capture competencies regarding the Skills for Success model, the “Deliver” portion of the assessment is useful for assessing facilitation skills in general.

If you want to use a less formal assessment, you could have new facilitators rate themselves in the following areas.

1. Knowledge of the English language (grammar system, phonetic system, language skills, etc.)
2. Facilitation experience and confidence
3. Lesson planning experience and confidence
4. Intercultural communicative competence
5. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion experience and confidence

These answers will help you determine important areas for training and development.

Training Resources

Once you and your facilitator have a clear picture of where they are starting, you can create a plan for training and development.

[Alberta Routes](#) and the [Community Adult Learning Program](#) are great resources to find support for new facilitators. The Alberta Routes advisors will help your organization build professional development plans for all instructors and volunteers.

Alberta Routes

Alberta Routes provides the following opportunities for facilitator and tutor training and professional development:

1. [Live webinars](#)
2. [Alberta Routes tip sheets](#)
3. [Alberta Routes resources](#)
4. [Alberta Routes mentorship](#)

Community Learning Network

The Community Learning Network (CLN) is the organization that supports training and development for CALPs across Alberta. They operate the [CALP Portal](#), which is the online centre for training and development for anyone who works or volunteers within a CALP.


The CALP Portal provides access to:

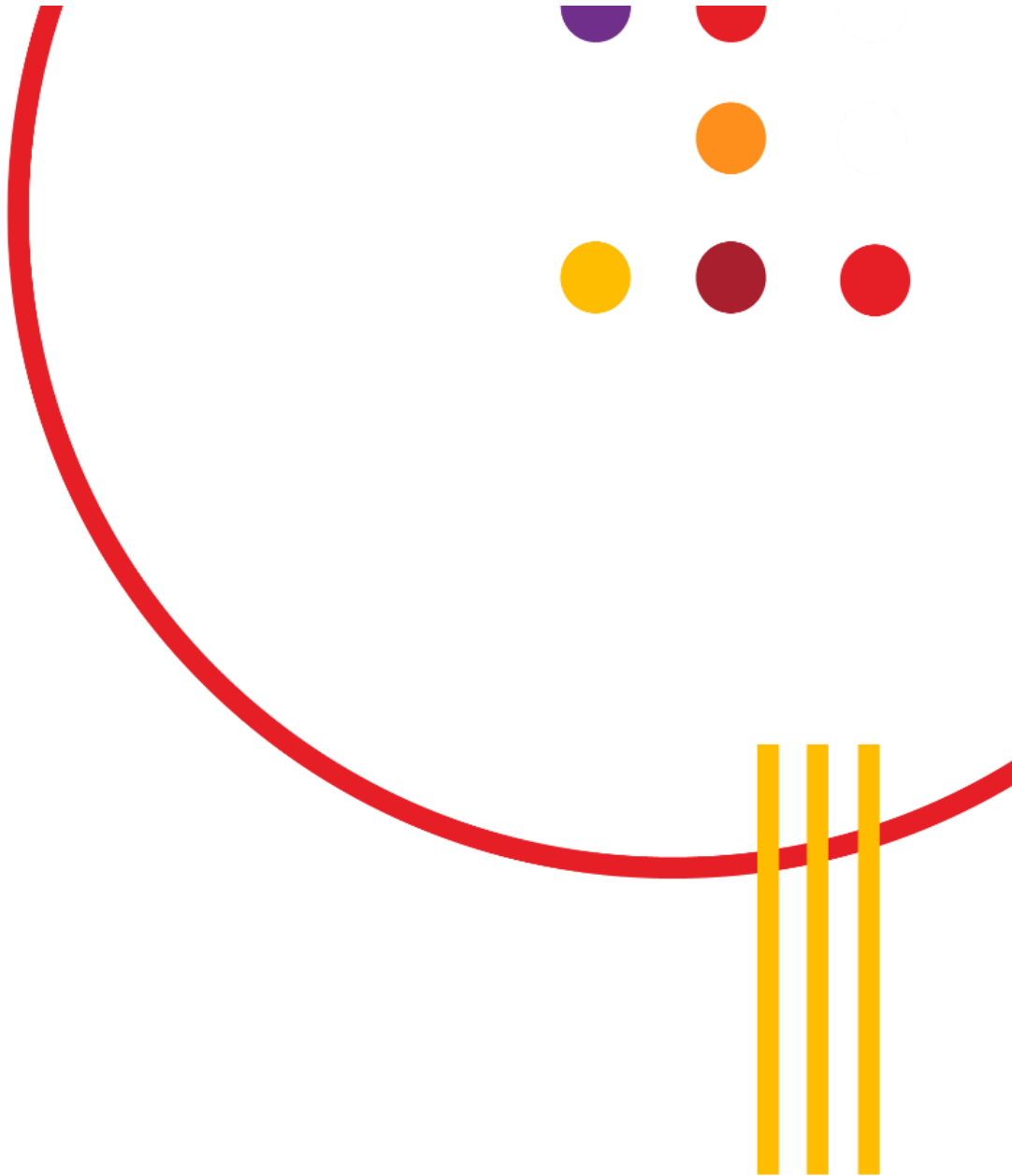
1. Training webinars
2. A resource library
3. A forum to ask questions and have discussions
4. Access to registration for the Literacy and Learning Symposium

Volunteer Development

Most people who volunteer to tutor an English language learner are not trained in facilitation or the inner workings of the English language. Although the professional expectations of tutoring programs are typically lower, it is still valuable to give volunteer tutors training and learning opportunities to support them in their role.

Training resources for tutors include:

1. The [Alberta Routes ESL Tutor Handbook](#)
 2. The Alberta Routes ESL Tutor Training workshop
 3. The Tutor Training e-learning module on the CALP Portal
- 



Part 3: Planning Programs and Lessons



Planning Language Programs

Planning an English language program for the first time is a large undertaking. This section will break down the task of planning a language program into four steps:

1. Program planning
2. Lesson planning
3. Materials selection
4. Assessment

After you have completed and analyzed a community needs assessment, the next step is to plan English language programs that meet the needs that have been identified.

Analyze the Needs Assessment

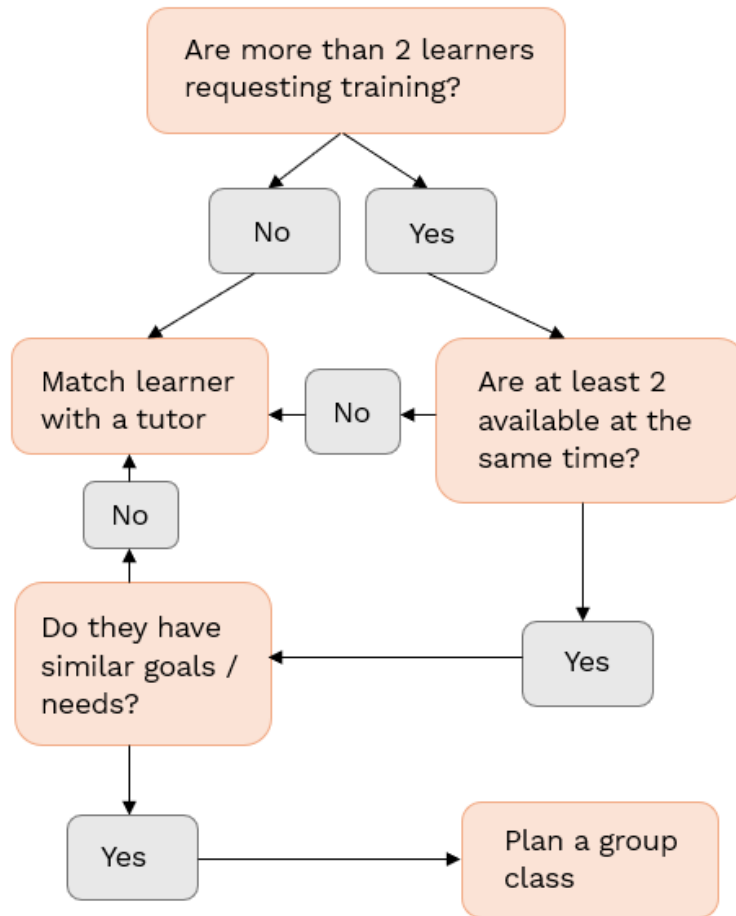
Once you have determined community needs and completed several learner needs assessments, you can begin to analyze the data you have collected. To do this, look for patterns in the answers your learners and stakeholders gave. For example, if many learners said that they need to use English in a work setting, you should consider planning a workplace language program. Or, if many learners want to get their Canadian citizenship in the next year, you should think about scheduling a citizenship preparation class.

If there are groups of learners with similar goals, needs, and availability, you can attempt to schedule a group class to meet the needs of these learners. If there are individuals who have different needs than the other learners, you should try to match them up with a tutor.

Use the decision tree on the next page if you are having trouble deciding whether group classes or tutoring best fits your learners' needs:

Tip

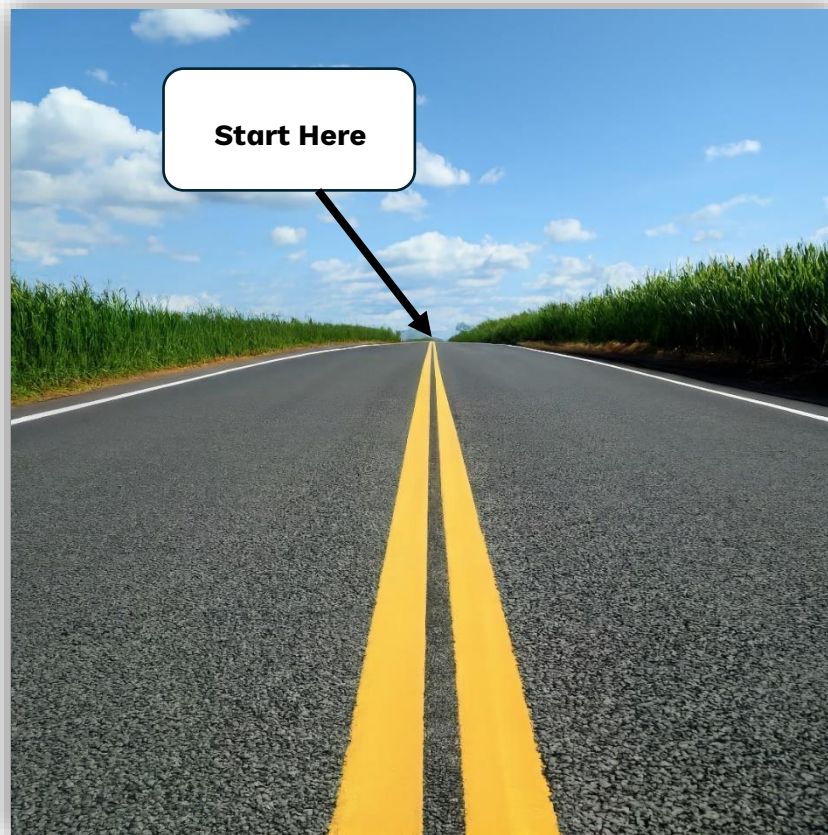
If you are struggling to find ideas, you can go back to pages 10-11 of this resource and ask, *would any of these program types meet the needs of my community?*



Begin with the End in Mind

Once you have chosen a type of program (group class, tutoring, workplace language, settlement language, tutoring, etc.), you will need to create a program plan or course outline. This will function like a map of your program. Maps and program outlines are both plans to get from where you (or learners) are to a final destination. This means that the best place to start planning any program is thinking about where you want to go – the end. You can do this by asking yourself, *what do I want learners to be able to do at the end of this program?* Beginning with the end in mind helps you stay on track as you move through each step of the planning process.

Begin with the end in mind



Outcomes

The answers you get to the question, *what do I want learners to be able to do at the end of this program?* are called outcomes. These are short statements that focus on the knowledge and abilities you want learners to have when they have completed the program.

Example outcomes could include:

- Learners will be able to hold a 5-minute conversation about everyday topics.
- Learners will be able to actively participate in parent/teacher meetings.
- Learners will be able to fill out workplace forms accurately.

There should be a strong relationship between the needs identified in your community needs assessment and the program outcomes you select.

Program Structure

After you have chosen your outcomes, you will need to identify the most appropriate structure to achieve the outcomes. You will need to consider:

- The size of the learner group who would benefit from the program
- The availability of learners
- The availability of staff/tutors
- Local childcare and school schedules
- Public transportation options and schedules

All the above factors should be considered when selecting a program structure. For example, if you choose to run a course during the mid-afternoon, but most of your learners work the day shift, you will be unlikely to have a good turnout for the course.

Similarly, if you decide to run a 10-week program, but week 10 overlaps with the school holiday break, it would be more practical to offer a 9-week program.

If you decide to run a tutoring program, you will need to consider several questions:

- How will you decide if a match is a “good fit”?
- How involved or uninvolved will you (the coordinator) be in scheduling tutoring sessions?
- How long should the learner and tutor work together?
- How will you assess whether the learner is making progress toward their goals?

The answers to these questions will influence how you structure your tutoring program.

Topics and Themes

Once you have your outcomes and program structure set, you can start to fill in the content. Courses and programs are usually divided into units or modules. Each unit or module has several lessons about a topic or theme.

For example, if you are planning an 8-week English for the workplace course, it would make sense to divide the course up into 4 sections:

Course: Language for the Workplace	
Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners will be able to perform a job search.• Learners will be able to participate in a job interview.• Learners will be able to complete onboarding tasks.• Learners will succeed in performing common daily workplace tasks using English.	
Weeks	Theme
1-2	Job Search
3-4	Interviews
5-6	Onboarding
7-8	Success at Work

The above program structure can work just as well for tutoring programs as classes and courses. Many CALPs have strong tutoring programs and some of these have no classroom offerings.

In the example, the themes match up with the stages of the job search process and the course outcomes.

To decide how to divide your program into topics or themes, ask yourself, *is there a logical way to divide the information/skills I want to teach?*

For example, a settlement class could be divided into different locations:

1. Using English at a restaurant
2. Using English at the doctor's office
3. Using English at the bus stop

Or a CELPIP preparation test could focus on the parts of the CELPIP test:

1. The Speaking Test
2. The Listening Test
3. The Reading Test
4. The Writing Test

However you choose to divide the content, make sure that each topic/theme leads toward the achievement of the program outcomes.

To learn more about topics and themes, ask your Alberta Routes advisor about their Teaching by Theme workshop.

Tasks

Once you have divided your program into topics and themes, you can ask yourself, *within this topic – what tasks will learners have to perform using the English language?*

Learning the English language is not the same as learning the names of the Canadian provinces and territories or learning a multiplication table. Content can be memorized and repeated. Skills must be learned, practiced, and used in the context of a real-world task. It is an important best practice to plan all programs and lessons to support the things that learners must do on a day-to-day basis or to reach their goal(s). This style of language teaching is called task-based language teaching (TBLT).

Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an approach in which learners use authentic language to do meaningful tasks in the target language.

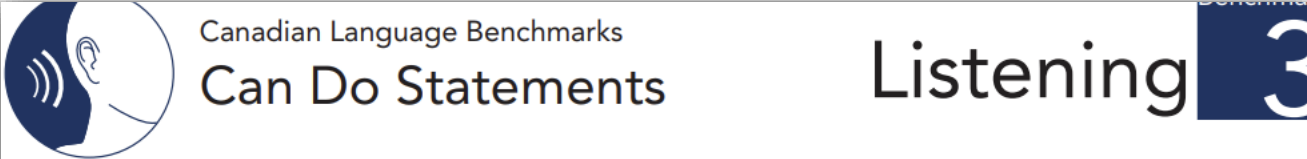
This approach is also referred to as task-based instruction (TBI).

(Alberta Routes, 2019)

Example tasks could include:

- Fill out a job application form
- Order a beverage at a local coffee shop
- Start a conversation with someone on the bus
- Understand the gist of a news story in a YouTube video
- Make an appointment with a doctor
- Ask for directions to the restroom
- Locate your favourite local shop on google maps

The Canadian language benchmarks document has example real-world tasks included for each CLB level:



Canadian Language Benchmarks
Can Do Statements Listening **3**

At this Benchmark, I can:

- understand most simple sentences

When:

- I can see the person
- the person speaks at a slow to normal rate and helps me understand
- the person often uses pictures or gestures
- the topic is familiar

Interacting with Others	Getting Things Done
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Understand very short, simple social conversations (including greetings, introductions and endings). <p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an apology from a friend• an introduction to a new co-worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Understand common requests, warnings, and permission. <p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a request for a day off work• a request to borrow a book

(CCLB, 2013)

Example Tasks

Each level of the CLB document and CLB Can Do Statements, has example tasks you can use in your lesson plans, or use to give you ideas for other tasks.

Remember, a task is a replication of something the learners do in the real world.

A workplace language program that includes tasks could look like this:

Course: Language for the Workplace

Outcomes:

- Learners will be able to perform a job search.
- Learners will be able to participate in a job interview.
- Learners will be able to complete onboarding tasks.
- Learners will succeed in performing common daily workplace tasks using English.

Weeks	Theme	Tasks Learners will be able to . . .
1-2	Job Search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a job search website to find local job postings. • Fill out a job application. • Write a simple resume.
3-4	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greet an interviewer politely. • Use appropriate body language for an interview. • Answer interview questions accurately and politely.
5-6	Onboarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill out onboarding paperwork. • Read and understand an employment contract. • Read and understand a policies and procedures document. • Ask questions about workplace tasks and procedures.
7-10	Success at Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow verbal instructions. • Understand and respond to emails. • Participate in short phone calls.

To learn more about task-based language teaching, ask your Alberta Routes advisor about their TBLT workshop.

Skills

Once you have decided which tasks to focus on, you will need to identify the skills learners will need to successfully perform them. You should consider the following types of skills when you are planning your tasks:

Language Skills

Your learners should need to use at least one of the four language skills to succeed in each task:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

To decide which skills learners will need, ask yourself:

1. Will the learner need to listen and understand anything to perform this task?

Examples: News stories, conversations, instructions

2. Will the learner need to speak to anyone to perform this task?

Examples: Answer interview questions, describe symptoms of illness

3. Will the learner need to read anything to perform this task?

Examples: Pamphlets, menus, websites

4. Will the learner need to write anything to perform this task?

Examples: Emails, reports

For example, for learners to be able fill out a job application form, they will need to read and understand the form (*reading*) and be able to write their information in the form (*writing*).

*Teaching Listening Skills*³

Strong listening skills are required to complete daily tasks that involve understanding spoken English. For example, if learners want to succeed in a job interview, they need to be able to *understand* the questions they are being asked.

Learners can have a difficult time understanding what they hear if:

- They have inadequate vocabulary.
- They fixate on certain words and miss the rest of what is said.
- They struggle to understand English pronunciation.
- They are tired or in a noisy environment.
- They expect spoken English to mirror written English.
- They are not practicing with authentic materials.

To build learners' listening skills, instructors should focus on teaching these strategies:

- Listening for the main idea
- Listening for specific information
- Making educated guesses when they don't understand
- Making predictions
- Recognizing key vocabulary
- Recognizing functional signals
- Grasping purpose, attitude, opinions of speaker
- Inferring relationships of speakers, levels of formality
- Making inferences; drawing conclusions
- Paraphrasing, summarizing, "re-telling"
- Taking notes

For example, if the instructor decides to focus on teaching learners how to hear and understand the level of formality and relationship between speakers, they can start by playing audio or showing videos of people with different types of relationships speaking to each other. The instructor can point out the differences between the levels of formality including vocabulary, tone, and body language. They should provide instruction and show enough examples for learners to be confident in identifying formality and relationships. Then, learners can listen to audio recordings and answer questions about the level of formality and relationships between the speakers.

³ Adapted from: Alberta Routes, *Strategies for Teaching Listening*

Teaching Speaking Skills⁴

Strong speaking skills are required to complete daily tasks that involve speaking to others in English. For example, if learners want to order a meal at a restaurant, they will need to *tell* the server what they would like to eat.

Learners can have a difficult time communicating in spoken English if:

- They are nervous about making mistakes.
- They have inadequate vocabulary.
- They struggle to pronounce words correctly.
- They don't have a strong grasp of English grammar.
- They are not able to practice often.
- They feel the need to prepare before speaking.

To build learners' speaking skills, instructors should focus on teaching these strategies:

- Starting or joining a conversation
- Holding their turn while thinking
- Speaking with fluency
- Using accurate vocabulary and grammar for the context
- Using appropriate body language to support spoken language
- Using appropriate stress, rhythm, and intonation
- Using the appropriate level of formality for the context
- Using formulaic "chunks" in specific contexts

For example, if the instructor decides to focus on teaching learners to use the correct level of formality for the situation, the learners will need instruction on the vocabulary, grammar, and tone to use in different social situations. Then, they will need structured practice that mimics these different social situations in the classroom. For example, the instructor might write "How would you greet _____ at the grocery store?" on the board, and have each learner pick a slip of paper from a hat. The slip of paper could say "Your boss" or "Your best friend" or any other relationship. They would then have to tell the class how they would greet this person if they saw them at the grocery store. The feedback would focus on whether they chose the correct level of formality or not. Then, the instructor should provide independent practice.

⁴ Adapted from: Alberta Routes: *Strategies for Teaching Speaking*

Teaching Reading Skills⁵

Many of the tasks we do on a daily basis require us to find and use information from text. Strong reading skills are necessary for success with these tasks. For example, learners will need to understand the words and phrases on their work timesheet, so they can fill it out and get paid.

Learners can have a difficult time understanding text if . . .

- They have had less than ten years of formal education.
- They have inadequate vocabulary.
- They have a learning disability, such as dyslexia.
- Their first language does not use a phonetic alphabet.
- They have undiagnosed vision impairment.

To build learners' reading skills, instructors should focus on teaching these strategies:

- Inferring purpose, audience, organization
- Making predictions
- Skimming for the main idea
- Scanning for specific information
- Deducing meaning through context clues, word formation, synonyms, restatements, sentence structure
- Using knowledge of genre to make sense of text
- Recognizing signals
- Inferring, generalizing, drawing conclusions
- Relating ideas to real life
- Relating ideas from different sources
- Recognizing opinion, bias, sexism, etc.

For example, if an instructor decides to teach a lesson on scanning for specific information, they will first need to explain why scanning can be helpful and how to scan a document. Once the learners have a basic understanding of when and how to scan, the instructor could plan a guided practice activity such as a “scanning race”, where learners must race to locate a specific word or phrase in text. After learners have engaged in guided practice with feedback, they can engage in independent practice.

⁵ Adapted from: Alberta Routes: *Strategies for Teaching Reading*

Teaching Writing Skills⁶

Many tasks, especially related to government services or jobs, require strong writing skills. Without these skills, learners will struggle to apply for jobs or citizenship, craft professional emails in the workplace, and fill out basic paperwork.

Learners can have a difficult time writing in English if . . .

- They have had less than ten years of formal education.
- They don't have a strong grasp of English grammar.
- They have inadequate vocabulary.
- Their first language does not use a phonetic alphabet.
- They have a learning disability, such as dyslexia.
- They have a physical disability or lack strong fine motor skills.

To build learners' writing skills, instructors should focus on teaching these strategies:

- Conveying main ideas clearly.
- Using transitions between paragraphs and topics.
- Using appropriate formality for the context.
- Using appropriate format for the context.
- Using an appropriate and polite tone.
- Using persuasive language.
- Using descriptive language.
- Writing legibly
- Using accurate spelling and grammar.

For example, if an instructor decides to teach a lesson on writing emails with correct format, the learner will need input that includes the components of an email and examples of emails with correct format. Then, the instructor can provide guided practice, such as an email puzzle, where learners must reconstruct an email that has been cut into strips. Finally, learners can do independent practice by writing their own original emails.

For more information about teaching the four language skills, register or host an Alberta Routes workshop on reading, writing, speaking, or listening.

⁶ Adapted from: Alberta Routes: *Strategies for Teaching Writing*

Adjacent Language Skills

Aside from the four language skills, you should also ask yourself if the learners will need instruction in these areas to perform the chosen tasks:

- Pronunciation
- Vocabulary
- Grammar

For example, for learners to be able to fill out a job application form, they will need to understand the words they see on the form (*vocabulary*) and know what answers they are expected to provide (*vocabulary*). They may also need to write complete sentences that are easy to read because the words are in the correct order (*grammar*).

Teaching Pronunciation⁷

Pronunciation refers to how language sounds when it is spoken, and how those sounds are produced. Pronunciation instruction can focus on one of two levels:

1. Segmental

The segmental level of pronunciation focuses on the individual sounds of the English language, and how to produce them with the different parts of the mouth. These individual sounds are called phonemes. Each language has different phonemes, and when we speak our second language with the phonemes of our first language, this creates an accent. The goal of teaching the English sound system is not to completely remove a person's accent, but to make their speech comprehensible, or clear enough to understand.

2. Suprasegmental

The suprasegmental level of pronunciation focuses on how we stress (or emphasize) syllables in our words, and words in our sentences. Stress patterns have just as much impact as sounds on how easy it is to understand a person's speech. Not all languages use stress the same way

⁷ Adapted from: Alberta Routes: *Foundations for Teaching Pronunciation*

English does, so teaching this to newcomers can have a dramatic effect on how easy their speech is to understand.

Suprasegmentals also include tone and intonation. These things effect how polite speakers sound, and what emotion listeners will perceive when they listen to their speech. Instructors should focus on these things to ensure their learners come across the way they intend to.

Pronunciation, like grammar, should always be taught in the context of a real-world task. Instructors should ask themselves, *what pronunciation instruction would help learners be successful with the task at hand?* For example, if the instructor is teaching a lesson on starting conversation by asking questions, they could add an instruction segment on question intonation.

To learn more about teaching pronunciation, please register for or host the Alberta Routes Strategies for Teaching Pronunciation workshop.

*Teaching Vocabulary*⁸

The term vocabulary refers to the English words and phrases that a learner can understand and use. Explicit vocabulary instruction is key for learners to succeed in performing language tasks using all four skills.

Vocabulary focus should be included in the instruction phase of a class. When deciding what vocabulary to teach, instructors should examine the language task they are focusing on and ask, *what words and phrases will learners need to know to be successful with this task?* The answer to that question will tell you what words and phrases to teach. A running list of new vocabulary is often kept on a whiteboard or flipchart at the front of the class space.

Learning vocabulary can be a very fun and engaging part of English language classes. There are many games and activities instructors can use to make the process interesting to learners and help them easily remember the words they learned. For examples of these, ask to host or register for the Alberta Routes Vocabulary Development workshop.

⁸ Adapted from: Alberta Routes: *Developing Vocabulary in ESL Learners*

*Teaching Grammar*⁹

The term grammar refers to the structure of the English language, including word order, verb tenses, and parts of speech. Learners' grammar must be accurate enough in both speech and writing for others to understand the meaning they are attempting to convey.

It is important that EAL instructors teach grammar within the context of real-world language tasks. When planning the instruction phase of a lesson, they should ask themselves, *what grammar will learners need to be successful with the language task at hand?* For example, if the lesson is focused on describing people or places, learners will need to be able to use adjectives correctly.

For more information on how to teach grammar, plan to register for or host the Alberta Routes workshop, Strategies for Teaching Grammar.

Skills for Success

Just as the Canadian Language Benchmarks describe the four language skills, the [Skills for Success model](#) describes the nine skills that people need to be successful in all areas of work and life.

3 of the skills overlap with the CLBs:

- Reading
- Writing
- Communication (Listening & Speaking)

The other 6 are:

- Digital
- Numeracy
- Problem solving
- Adaptability
- Collaboration
- Creativity and innovation

Building these skills with the language skills will help learners succeed in all areas of your chosen tasks.

To learn more about the Skills for Success, ask your Alberta Routes advisor.

⁹ Adapted from: Alberta Routes: *Strategies for Teaching Grammar*

Skills Brainstorm Tool

Instructions: Write the task you want learners to be able to perform at the top of the page. Circle the language skills, adjacent skills, and Skills for Success your learners will need to successfully perform the task. Then, use the space below to brainstorm what will need to be taught to build those skills.

Task:		
Language Skills: Listening Speaking Reading Writing	Adjacent Skills: Pronunciation Vocabulary Grammar	Skills for Success: Digital Numeracy Problem solving Adaptability Collaboration Creativity and innovation

<p>What needs to be taught?</p>	<p>What needs to be taught?</p>	<p>What needs to be taught?</p>
--	--	--

Example Unit Outline

A unit outline with all the parts discussed above might look like this:

<p>Unit: Job Search</p>		
<p>Outcomes</p>	<p>Tasks</p>	<p>Skills</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners will be able to perform a job search. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a job search website to find local job postings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Digital Vocabulary

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill out a job application. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing • Vocabulary • Grammar
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a simple resume. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing • Digital • Vocabulary • Grammar

For Additional Training

See the following resources to learn more about these topics:

- Planning a tutor program:
 - [Alberta Routes: ESL Tutor Handbook](#)
 - [CALP: Tutor Program – First Steps tip sheet](#)
- Planning Programs:
 - Alberta Routes: Starting or Inheriting an ESL Program workshop
 - CALP: Developing CALP Programs [tip sheet](#)

Planning Lessons¹⁰

Once a program outline has been completed, either the facilitator or program coordinator can begin planning individual lessons. Most lesson plans contain the following elements:

- Objectives
- Time
- Materials
- Activities
- Assessment

¹⁰ Adapted from: Alberta Routes, *Lesson Planning Made Easy*

Objectives

Objectives are similar to outcomes but are more specific. They always answer the question, *what will the learner(s) be able to do?* Lesson objectives should connect to the outcomes and tasks in the course outline. Like goals, they can be evaluated using the SMART framework:

- **S** Specific
- **M** Measurable
- **A** Attainable
- **R** Relevant
- **T** Time-bound

Good objectives are the end result of the real-world tasks your learners will practice during the lesson.

Example objectives can include:

- Learners will be able to initiate, carry on, and end a casual 3-minute conversation.
- Learners will be able to successfully order three menu items at Tim Horton's.
- Learners will be able to answer 75% of practice test questions correctly.

The rest of the lesson plan should consist of learning activities that lead learners toward the realization of the objectives.

Time

When planning lessons, it is important to work within the time constraints of your program structure. Programs that have 6 hours of class time per week will be able to go more in-depth than programs with 2 hours of class time per week. Each activity you plan should have a time estimate. This will keep the facilitator on track as they execute the lesson plan, which will ensure that learners get to benefit from all the planned activities.

Materials

Well-planned lessons will include reference to the materials necessary to carry out the lesson plan. This can include:

- Handouts
- PowerPoint slides
- Links

- Learning technology

If the materials themselves are not linked in the lesson plan, it is helpful to include a note about where the materials can be found.

Activities

When deciding what activities to plan, ask yourself, *how will you teach the objective? What will you get the learner(s) to do?*

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is an important concept to keep in mind while planning lessons. When you are planning what you will teach, carefully consider *each piece* of language, skills, and information learners will need to be successful. Start with the most basic concepts, and build on them, just like a construction crew builds a skyscraper. You start with the foundation, and then build on top of it.

Example:

For learners to be successful answering job interview questions, they need to be able to understand the grammar and pronunciation patterns of questions in general. They will also need to understand common job interview vocabulary.

If you are new to lesson planning, the following cycle can be helpful as you begin to picture what a good lesson looks like:



Warm-up

Warm-up activities are designed to help your learners get into the learning mindset. These activities can be quick icebreakers that build interest in the day's topic, a review of the previous class, or activation activities where learners discuss what they already know about a topic. Warm-ups should feel casual and low stakes. The main content of the lesson should be saved for the instruction and practice activities.

Example

The topic of the class is answering job interview questions. The facilitator puts learners into pairs and has them discuss the following questions:

- Have you ever participated in a job interview?
- If yes, what questions did they ask you?

The facilitator then asks the whole class for a show of hands of those who have been in a job interview and writes a list of the questions they remember on the whiteboard/screen.

Instruction

In the instruction portion of a lesson, the facilitator will present the new information, content, or strategies that learners will need to master the skills and tasks they are building in the course or program. This should include demonstrations of what the facilitator expects the learners to do in the guided and independent practice parts of the lesson. Seeing or hearing examples of the tasks performed is one of the best ways for learners to build knowledge that can transfer to action.

In an adult learning environment, the facilitator should spend the minimum necessary amount of time presenting and instructing. The goal is to give learners what they need as efficiently as possible so they can spend most of the class practicing and improving their skills by using them.

Example

The instructor writes or projects the ten most common job interview questions. They explain what each of the questions is trying to determine about the job interview candidate and provide strategies for answering them.

Guided Practice

Guided practice presents learners with the opportunity to practice using what was presented in the instruction section with plenty of supports. This might look like working through an example of the task as a whole class or in small groups, or only having learners do parts of the task instead of the whole thing.

Example

The facilitator puts learners into groups. Each group is given a job interview question and some information about the job interview candidate. Their task is to create “the perfect answer” to the interview question, given what they know about the candidate.

After each group has completed the activity, they present their answers to the whole class. The class discusses what about each group’s answer worked well and what might need to be changed.

Independent Practice

Independent practice gives learners the opportunity to practice the skills built in the other phases in the lesson. The independent practice should always look like a real-world task. When planning an independent practice task, ask yourself, *how can I replicate the real-world task as closely as possible in my classroom?* When the task learners practice in the classroom is similar to the task they will perform in real life, they will be more likely to succeed when they use that language outside of the classroom.

Example

The facilitator puts learners into pairs. They are given a list of job interview questions. They are instructed to take turns role playing an interviewer and interviewee. The facilitator will walk around the room and perform informal assessment with feedback.

Assessment¹¹

What is Assessment?

Assessment is any practice that measures what learners know or what they have learned. It can be used to discover what learners' language levels currently are or how successful a class or program has been.

There are three types of assessment EAL instructors can perform:

- Assessment for learning
- Assessment as learning
- Assessment of learning

We have already discussed *assessment for learning*, which is done in the needs assessment and placement test stages. *Assessment as learning* and *assessment of learning* are two types of assessment that can occur within language lessons.

Assessment as Learning

Assessment as learning is a blanket term for self- and peer-assessment.

“Self-[and peer-] assessment strategies are developed to give learners control of their own learning, better understanding of their own skills, and clearer focus on goals and objectives” (ATESL, 2009, p.90).

The benefits of these types of assessments are:

- They involve learners in their own learning
- They help learners reflect on their own learning

Assessment as learning can take many forms. Examples include:

- Learners comparing their work to criteria in a rubric, or a model
- Learners checking their own answers to comprehension questions
- Peer feedback
- Self-assessment checklists

¹¹ Adapted from: Alberta Routes: *ESL Assessment*

Example Self-Assessment

Did I...	Wow	Just fine	Work on it
Use a greeting?			
Introduce myself?			
Understand and answer questions correctly?			
Repeat and ask questions to check my comprehension?			
Provide enough details to support my answers?			
Use appropriate and professional body language?			
End the conversation with a “thank you” and “goodbye” before ending the interview?			

Assessment of Learning

Assessment of learning is also called summative assessment because it takes place after learners have completed a task, theme, or unit. It provides a picture of what the learner has learned or can do. *Assessment of learning* is important because it shows facilitators whether the learning outcomes have been reached, and to what degree. This is valuable information for both the learner and facilitator and can be used to make decisions about future classes or programs, or what learners should do next to reach their goals.

When designing assessments of learning, it is important to remember the following things:

1. What is assessed and expectations for success must be made clear to learners prior to assessments.
2. There must be a transparent connection between what is assessed and what is done in class.
3. The assessment task must be appropriate for adults, and not culturally biased.
4. The assessment must be meaningful and connected to what learners need to do outside of the classroom.
5. The assessment must be outcomes-based and focus on what the learners can do.

Example CLB 5 Job Interview Assessment Checklist

Can the learner...	Yes	Almost	Work on it
Use appropriate vocabulary when answering questions?			
Demonstrate good control of simple grammar structures when answering questions?			
Demonstrate some awareness of appropriate non-verbal cues and signals?			
Provide necessary information when answering interview questions?			
Repeat information and ideas to confirm understanding?			
End the conversation with a “thank you” and “goodbye” before ending the interview?			

Lesson Plan Example

Topic: Job Interviews	Date: June 2, 2024	CLB: 6
Duration: 120 minutes	Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 most common job interview questions. • Job candidate profiles A-D. • Assessment checklist. 	Vocabulary: Strengths Weaknesses Experience
Objective: Learners will be able to answer the 10 most common job interview questions clearly and thoroughly.		
Introduction/hook: Put learners into pairs and have them discuss the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever participated in a job interview? • If yes, what questions did they ask you? Ask the whole class for a show of hands of those who have been in a job interview and write a list of the questions they remember on the whiteboard/screen.		
Instruction: Write or project the ten most common job interview questions (attached). Explain what each of the questions is trying to determine about the job interview candidate and go through strategies for answering them.		
Guided Practice: Put learners into groups. Give each group a job interview question and one job candidate profile (A-D). Ask learners to create “the perfect answer” to the interview question, given what they know about the candidate. After each group has completed the activity, have them present their answers to the whole class. Facilitate a discussion about each group’s answers, focusing on what works well and what might need some work.		
Independent Practice: Put learners into pairs. Instruct them to take out their 10 job interview questions. Have learners take turns role playing an interviewer and interviewee, answering each of the questions. The facilitator will walk around the room and perform informal assessment with feedback.		
Assessment: Provide feedback using the job interview assessment checklist.		

Lesson Plan Template

Topic:	Date:	CLB:
Duration:	Materials:	Vocabulary:
Objective:		
Introduction/hook:		
Instruction:		
Guided Practice:		
Independent Practice:		
Assessment:		

For more information about lesson planning, ask your Alberta Routes advisor about the Lesson Planning Made Easy workshop. You can also review the following tipsheets:

[Lesson Planning for One-on-One Instruction](#)

[Lesson Planning for Small Group Instruction](#)

For more information about assessment, ask your Alberta Routes advisor about the ESL Assessment workshop. You can also review the [Learner Assessment](#) tipsheet.

Planning Lessons for Tutoring

Planning one-on-one lessons is a similar process to planning group classes, with a few exceptions. The two most significant benefits of tutoring are:

1. Flexibility

A benefit of one-on-one tutoring is that it allows for more flexibility than group classes. If learners come to class with questions, real-life problems, or requests to learn a specific thing, the tutor has full freedom to change the plan and help the learner with their need. This kind of flexibility does not work in a group class with set outcomes, as there would be little class time left to achieve those outcomes.

Tutors should encourage learners to bring materials to class from their real lives to ensure that the tutoring sessions are relevant and helpful.

2. Customization

Another benefit of tutoring is the level of customization possible in the learning experience. Because there are no other learners, tutors do not need to look for common needs and goals between learners. Instead, they are able to create customized learning plans that are specifically catered to their learner.

Two weeks of an example learning plan could look like this:

Learning Plan		
Learner Name: Igor Shevchenko		
Learner Goal: Pass the Canadian citizenship test		
Lesson	Goal	Resources
1	Read and answer quiz questions based on pages 1-24 of Discover Canada.	Discover Canada; Citizenship Quiz Questions
2	Read and answer quiz questions based on pages 25-50 of Discover Canada.	Discover Canada; Citizenship Quiz Questions

The lesson planning process for one-on-one tutoring sessions is the same as the process for planning group classes. You should begin with the outcomes, then choose the tasks, and finally plan the learning activities. Lesson plans may be shorter in duration due to the quicker pace of one-on-one sessions, but they can follow the same structure as group classes.

Those steps are:



For more information on planning lessons in the tutoring context, please reference the [Alberta Routes ESL Tutor Handbook](#).

Planning Multi-Level Lessons

Multi-level classes are very common, especially in rural EAL contexts. According to the Alberta Routes Multi-Level Handbook, multilevel classes can be defined as classes that are “diverse in one or more of the following ways”:

1. Language proficiency levels
2. Previous education levels
3. Cultural expectations regarding class roles and activities
4. Motivation

(Alberta Routes, pp. 6-8).

Multi-level classes have both challenges and benefits. While it is possible to plan multi-level classes that provide a rich learning experience for all learners, great care needs to be taken in the planning process to make this possible.

When planning multi-level lessons, coordinators and/or facilitators must become competent in the following knowledge and practice areas:

1. Strategic grouping

Depending on the activity and its objectives, it may be most helpful to group learners in one or more of the following ways:

- Homogenous groups:
“Learners are placed in groups with others of similar proficiency levels” (p. 11).
- Heterogenous groups:
“Learners with a range of levels work together to accomplish a task” (p.12).
- Whole-group activities:

Learners work as a group to discuss content and complete tasks.

2. Differentiation

Differentiation “refers to the practice of planning and teaching while taking into account the diversity of learners in a class. Differentiated instruction should provide all learners with the opportunity to improve their language skills and work at their own levels” (p. 15).

Lessons can be differentiated by varying:

- Task complexity
- The amount of scaffolding
- Communicative stress
- Language complexity

3. Tips, tricks, and strategies

Using strategic activities and methods can make it easier for learners of multiple levels and backgrounds to participate and learn.

You can find examples of these types of activities, best practices, and example lesson plans for multi-level classes in the [Alberta Routes Multi-Level Handbook](#).

You can also contact your Alberta Routes advisor for mentorship, or to register for or host their workshop on strategies for teaching multi-level classes.

Selecting EAL Materials

Classroom materials are anything that ESL instructors can use to create learning experiences for participants. This includes print materials as well as videos and other types of media. There are many factors that EAL program planners and facilitators should consider when choosing materials for the classroom. As a person new to program planning and/or facilitation, use the following principles to guide you as you choose materials.

Materials should:

1. Be authentic.
2. Support lesson outcomes.
3. Be level-appropriate.
4. Contribute to a peaceful classroom environment.
5. Be written in plain language.
6. Be inclusive.

Authentic Materials

The best materials to use in an English language class are materials that “provide authentic, contextualized uses of language” (ATESL, 2011, S4-9). This means that the best materials are items from the real world (or replications of them) that learners need to use in their daily lives. The purpose of an English language class is to teach learners skills they can use to accomplish real-world goals. When they are honing those skills in the classroom, it is best for them to practice with the “real thing” as much as possible. This makes transferring their learning to real-world scenarios much easier. For example, if you are teaching a lesson on answering job interview questions, a video of a real job interview that allows learners to listen to authentic answers would be the most effective material to use.

Other examples of authentic materials include:

- Websites
- Restaurant menus
- Store flyers
- Podcasts
- Job ads

As a facilitator/program planner, take every opportunity to bring the community into the classroom. Selecting materials from local businesses and organizations will help learners connect with their new community.

Materials that Support Outcomes

The materials you select should connect directly to the outcomes of the course and objectives of the lesson. This is true whether they are authentic materials or materials that have been created for classroom use.

For example, imagine a lesson with the objective, *learners will be able to describe cold and/or flu symptoms to a doctor*. When you are searching for materials to use in this lesson, you might find an activity where learners are taught and asked to practice the names of common objects in a doctor's office. This activity is connected to the theme of the class (language for health care). However, before selecting this activity for the lesson, you will need to ask yourself, *does this activity support the lesson objective?* Because learners do not need to know the names of objects in a doctor's office to describe their symptoms to a doctor, the answer would be *no*.

Examples of materials that could be used to accomplish the lesson objective include:

- A recorded conversation or video of a person describing symptoms to a doctor.
- Role cards that help learners conduct a mock doctor visit and describe symptoms.

Level-Appropriate Materials

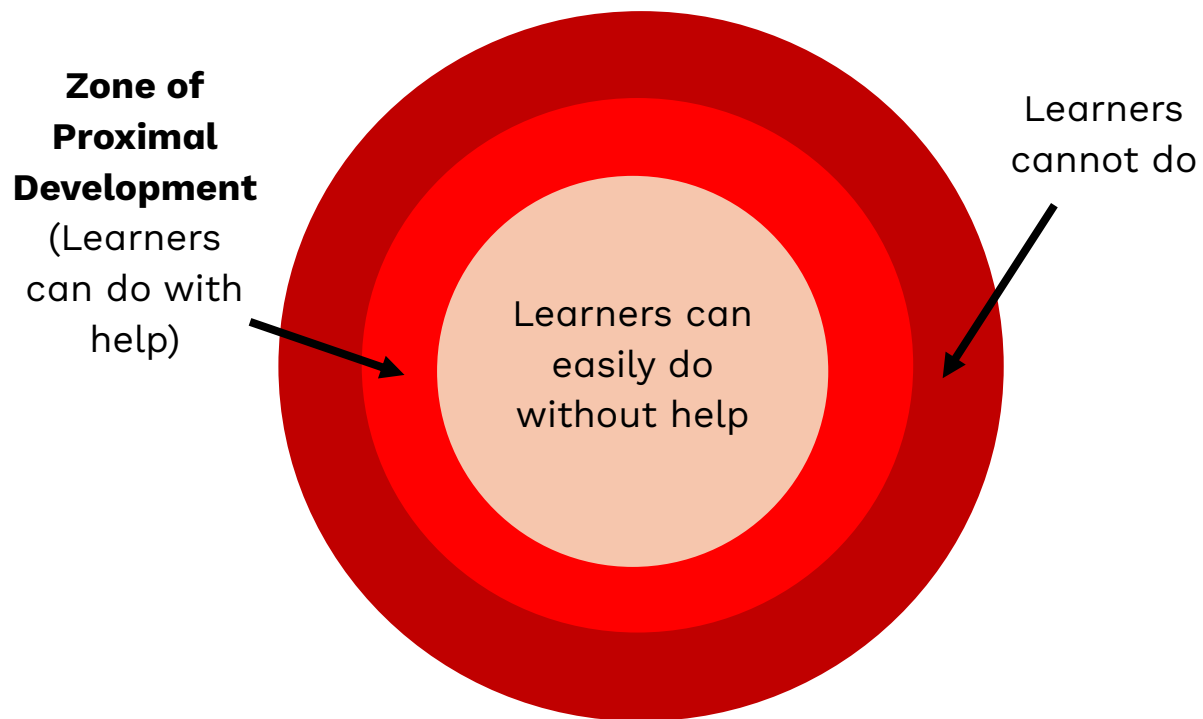
Before selecting materials for a class or individual learner, make sure you review the results of the learner placement assessments, so you have a clear understanding of their current language levels.

To make sure the materials you select are appropriate for your learners, you should choose tasks and activities that are just above the difficulty level that they can easily do by themselves. This will put learners into the “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978).

The zone of proximal development is the place where learners are both challenged by the difficulty of an activity, but still able to complete it with help. An easy way to make sure that learners are in this zone is to select

materials that are one CLB level higher than the results of their placement test.

The Zone of Proximal Development



Materials that Contribute to a Peaceful Environment

It is important to consider learners' cultural backgrounds and life experiences when selecting materials. Avoid activities, readings, and discussion topics that might easily bring up memories of traumatic events, cause conflict between cultural groups, cause religious or race-based offense, or that contain biases and stereotypes toward a particular group.

EAL classrooms should be safe spaces for learners to grow and learn. This means that program planners and facilitators must be mindful when choosing materials to ensure that peace and safety are top priorities.

To learn more

For more information about selecting materials for the EAL classroom, please reference the [ATESL Curriculum Framework: Selecting Methods and Materials](#).

Plain Language Materials

There will be times when you cannot find materials that work for a lesson you are planning. In this situation, you may choose to create your own materials. Materials created by beginner English language facilitators should be written in plain language. Facilitators with more experience using the Canadian Language Benchmarks will be able to use the framework to design materials for specific levels.

“According to the International Plain Language Federation,

“Communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended readers can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information” (Government of Canada, [Plan language, accessibility, and inclusive communications](#), 2024).

Plain language principles recommend that materials¹²:

- Are written for the average reader
- Are organized to serve the reader’s needs
- Have useful headings
- Uses “you” and other pronouns to speak to the reader
- Uses active voice
- Use short sections and short sentences
- Use the simplest tense possible - simple present and simple past are best
- Omit excess words
- Use concrete, familiar words

¹² Adapted from: <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/checklists/checklist/>

- Use “must” to express requirements instead of “shall”
- Use lists and tables to simplify complex material
- Include plenty of white space on each page

Inclusive Materials

Just like instructors, learning materials can send subtle messages about who is and is not welcome and accepted in a space. Because of this, it is important for instructors to evaluate the materials they choose to use (or create), to ensure they contribute to an inclusive classroom.

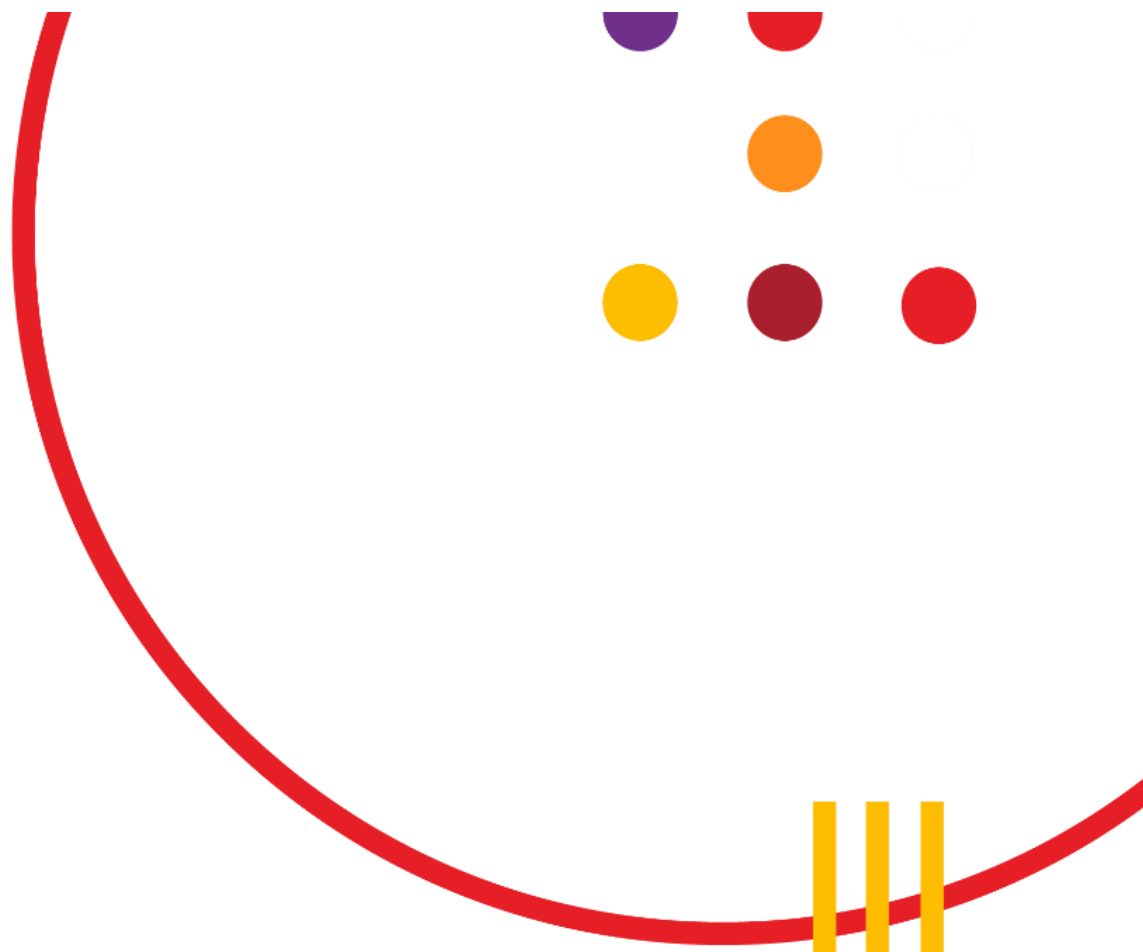
When evaluating materials, instructors should examine the images, case studies, and other text carefully for both stereotypes and representation. Images and text in materials should include and normalize individuals, families, and groups of varying . . .

- Ages
- Ethnicities
- Races
- Native languages
- Sexual orientations
- Gender identities
- Religions
- Abilities

If you notice that you routinely select materials that depict only certain types of people and families and exclude others, do your best to search for or create materials that make all learners feel welcome, seen, and represented.

For an example of what inclusive materials can look like, review the [ATESL Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism module](#).

Canadian ELT professional Tyson Seburn has published a book called *How to Write Inclusive Materials*. If your organization has a budget for book purchases, this resource will give you a roadmap for creating inclusive materials for your classroom.



Part 4: Facilitating EAL Classes

Best Practices for Language Teaching

Learning to teach well in an EAL environment is a process that takes many years of learning. This section of the new practitioner resource will focus on the basics of facilitating EAL classes. Once you master these basics, you can move on to more advanced best practices and teaching methods.

Facilitation Basics¹³

It can take some time to get comfortable facilitating classes if you have not done so before. As a new facilitator, it is a good idea to choose one of the following best practices to focus on per month. Once each best practice begins to feel like second nature, you can start working on the next one. Understand that building confidence in all these areas will take time and effort, but that the work you put in will be well worth your time as you watch the lives of your learners transform.

Communicating Clearly

One of the most important things new EAL facilitators can work on, is communicating simply, clearly, and slowly. Doing these things can help your learners understand you well:

- Speak at a slow but steady pace. Increase the speed as learners gain proficiency and confidence (Seger, 2024).
- **Use high-frequency vocabulary.**
- Give as many examples as possible.
- Use gestures and images to illustrate what you mean.
- Do not be afraid of long pauses, especially when you have asked learners to answer a question.

High-Frequency Vocabulary

High-frequency vocabulary are the words that are used most often in English. Using only high-frequency words helps learners understand you more easily, because it increases the likelihood that they have heard the words before.

You can reference the top 1000 words here:

https://www.k12reader.com/subject/vocabulary/fry-words/#google_vignette

¹³ Adapted from: <https://sfs-tools.ca/competency-framework/deliver/?tab=1>

Creating a Positive Classroom Atmosphere

One of the most important things EAL facilitators can do, is cultivate a positive classroom atmosphere. Creating a sense of community and safety helps language learning by lowering the “affective filter” (Krashen, 1986).

Stephen Krashen proposes that “when feelings or emotions such as anxiety, fear, or embarrassment are elevated, it becomes difficult for language acquisition to occur. The **affective filter** has commonly been described as an imaginary wall that rises in the mind and prevents input, thus blocking cognition” (Gonzalez, 2020).

Because learning is more difficult when learners experience negative emotions, it is the facilitator’s job to create an environment where those feelings can be minimized. This can be done by:

- Creating classroom routines that promote relationship building
 - Examples:
 - Daily check-ins
 - Regular sharing times
 - Group and pair work
- Using soft eyes and tone of voice when speaking to learners
- Using humour when appropriate
- Encouraging mistakes as a part of the learning process
- Avoiding topics that cause unnecessary stress or conflict
- Using encouragement to build learner self-confidence
- Providing learners with choices and opportunities to engage in self-assessment



Making Learning Interactive and Engaging

Everyone learns better when classroom activities are interactive and engaging. This is true for both adults and children. To create an interactive and engaging learning experience, facilitators can:

- Ask questions to facilitate discussion and check understanding
- Encourage questions and comments from participants
- Use a combination of individual, partner, and group activities
- Use interactive technologies
- Teach with games and activities when possible and practical
- Invite learners to be the “experts” by allowing them to research and instruct on specific topics

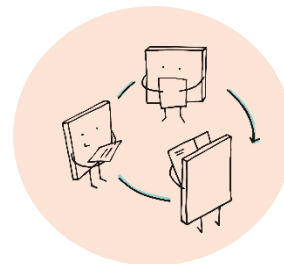
For more ideas on how to use games and engaging activities in the classroom, ask your Alberta Routes advisor about the ESL Toolkit of Educational Games and Activities workshop.

Varying Instruction

There are many ways to present content and facilitate classes. Each learner will likely prefer different types of activities, teaching styles, and amounts of technology use in the classroom. Because all learners are different, it is beneficial for facilitators to use a variety of styles, types of activities, and methods of instruction.

Ideas for varying instruction include:

- Using a mixture of videos, discussions, and hands-on activities in the classroom
- Using a variety of grouping strategies (pairs, small groups, whole class)
- Using a variety of learning technologies to enhance instruction



Recognizing Learner Strengths and Experience

Learning a language is very challenging. Adult learners often feel embarrassed or infantilized in the language classroom, especially if they have children that have learned to use English more quickly than they have.

One way to help adult learners feel motivated and confident in the language classroom is by acknowledging and drawing upon the expertise each of them brings to the class. Adult learners come to the classroom with a lifetime of knowledge, experiences, and skills. Making them the experts, even in small ways, can boost morale and restore a sense of autonomy to learners.

Facilitators can do this by:

- Asking a learner to explain something about the field they work in to the class
- Having learners give presentations about topics they are knowledgeable and excited about
- Noting the strengths of each learner and making a point to acknowledge them out loud as often as possible
- Allowing learners to provide answers to questions before providing them yourself
- Before presenting content (a grammar point, strategies, etc.) ask what learners to explain what they already know about the topic



Responding to Learner Needs and Questions

Difficult Questions

One of the jobs of an EAL facilitator is addressing learner needs and questions as they arise in the class. This can cause anxiety in some new instructors, as it is impossible to plan for every question that learners could ask.

It is important to remember that you are not expected to be able to answer every question about the English language on the spot. There will be times that you do not know the answer immediately, and that is okay. What you can do in this situation is say, *I'm not sure! I will research that and tell you what I learn.*

Being willing to say *I don't know* helps model for learners that it is okay to be uncertain in your classroom. This should make them feel more comfortable trying new things and making mistakes, which will benefit their language learning.

Staying the Course

Sometimes, learner questions can turn into “rabbit trails” that take the class in a different direction than what was originally planned. This is okay once in awhile, but if you notice you are having a difficult time meeting your objectives because planned activities were not completed, this can turn into a problem.

Facilitators need to be able to guide discussions back to the target topic without diminishing the curiosity of learners. You can use phrases like these to do so:

- *I know we are all enjoying this discussion, but it is important that we move on to the next activity. Please ask me any questions you still have at the end of class today.*
- *I know you probably have more questions, but we do need to get back to the lesson. Please write down your questions and give them to me at the end of the lesson so I can answer them next time.*

Noticing Opportunities

If you notice that learners are asking similar questions, or expressing similar needs, it is a good idea to write these down and give them to the EAL program coordinator. These patterns can give coordinators ideas for additional programs that would help meet learner needs in your community.

Managing Disruptive Behaviours¹⁴

Creating Norms

The best way to manage a classroom and prevent disruptive behaviour is by making expectations clear at the beginning of the program. Negotiating behaviour norms as a class is a great way to encourage learners to take ownership of their behaviour and create accountability. When disrespect or other disruptions occur, the facilitator can reference the expectations set by the group to encourage more helpful behaviour in the future.

Classroom norms could include:

- Starting and ending the class on time
- Turning off or silencing cell phones
- Respecting the contributions of others
- Being open to new ideas
- Resolving differences calmly
- Staying on topic

It is also important for facilitators to have a plan to resolve ongoing patterns of disruptive behaviour or disrespect.

Managing Disruptions

Most classroom disruptions do not require a difficult conversation or some type of conversation. For example, a learner texting during class can be disruptive, but might be fixed by using one of the following techniques:

- Making eye contact with the disruptive person
- Reminding the group of the agreed-upon norms
- Moving toward the disruptive person
- Calling for a break

If the disruption takes the form of a conversation or persistent comments, you can acknowledge the comment, and redirect the conversation back to the topic of the class.

Some disruptive behaviours are persistent or severe enough that they warrant a direct conversation with the disruptive person. To do this in a productive way, ensure you:

- Speak with the person privately.

¹⁴ Adapted from: <https://www.thoughtco.com/manage-disruptive-behavior-in-classroom-31634>

- Confront the behaviour, not the person
- Speak for yourself only, not the class
- Seek to understand the reason for the disruption
- Ask the person to recommend a solution
- Review your expectations of classroom behaviour (if necessary)
- Try to come to an agreement on expectations going forward
- Explain any consequences of continued disruptions

If disruptions persist, you may need to have a conversation with the executive director or coordinator about what steps should be taken for the benefit of all learners in the class.



For more information and training on this topic, please register for or host the Alberta Routes workshop on Classroom Management.

EAL Literacy

Who are EAL Literacy Learners?

EAL literacy learners are learners who have had interruptions in their formal education. These learners have often not developed literacy skills in their first language, which presents a unique challenge for program planners and facilitators. EAL literacy learners must be supported in language development and literacy simultaneously.

It can be difficult for literacy learners to succeed in regular EAL classes because learners are often taught oral language by using reading and writing strategies (writing vocabulary lists, taking notes, etc.). These learners also do not have the wealth of learning strategies that learners with an extensive educational background typically have.

EAL literacy learners succeed best with a specific approach to instruction from trained facilitators. Because of this, EAL literacy is usually offered as a separate stream of instruction in major centres. Unfortunately, rural EAL programs are typically not able to offer separate EAL literacy classes. This means that facilitators in integrated programs need to familiarise themselves with EAL literacy best practices and do their best to incorporate them whenever possible and practical.

How can EAL literacy learners be identified?

EAL literacy learners are often identified during the intake process through the needs assessment or placement test. During needs assessments, learners should be asked to describe their formal education background. If the learner has had less than 10 full years (regular attendance, non-interrupted) of formal education, they will likely need literacy support. Literacy learners will also often score higher on the speaking and listening than the reading and writing placement tests. They should be flagged by the person conducting the assessment as a learner with possible literacy needs.

Some EAL literacy learners may not be identified during the intake process. Facilitators should be aware of the following characteristics of literacy learners, to identify them as requiring extra support.

EAL Literacy learners typically¹⁵:

- Appear inexperienced with text
- Have limited reading, writing, and learning strategies
- Prefer a hands-on learning style
- Have difficulty understanding and following instructions
- Have difficulty recognizing patterns
- Appear disorganized
- Display inconsistent performance
- Require more time to complete tasks

If you notice a learner displaying more than one of the above characteristics, this learner likely requires extra literacy support.

Best Practices for Teaching EAL Literacy Learners

The following list is an introduction to EAL literacy best practices. Additional training is recommended to become a proficient literacy instructor.

1. Teach new vocabulary and concepts orally *before* teaching them in written form.
2. Teach **sight words** instead of/before **phonics**.
3. Teach letter and word formation.
4. Give learners opportunities to compose sentences.
5. Spend time on spelling.
6. Provide immediate and positive correction.
7. Develop fine motor skills.
8. Reinforce the idea that text has meaning.

Sight Words vs Phonics

Teaching sight words is the practice of teaching learners to identify words just by looking at them, rather than teaching them to “sound the words out”.

Phonics is useful for learners who have already developed the skill of connecting sounds and symbols. Learners with interrupted formal education are unlikely to have this skill, so will learn to read faster by identifying words by sight.

Ask your Alberta Routes representative for resources that will help you teach sight words.

¹⁵ Adapted from: Alberta Routes, *Teaching ESL Literacy Learners*

For more a quick-reference sheet of strategies for teaching literacy learners, please reference the Alberta Routes tipsheet: Working with ELL Literacy Learners.

For a full list of strategies and more information on teaching EAL literacy, ask your Alberta Routes advisor about the EAL literacy workshop.

ATESL Best Practices

The [ATESL Best Practices](#) is a document that EAL program planners and facilitators can use to learn more about what excellence looks like in the EAL classroom.

The document describes best practices for the following areas:

1. [The EAL Program](#)
2. [Learner Support](#)
3. [The Staff](#)
4. [CLB and PBLA](#)
5. [Curriculum](#)
6. [Instruction](#)
7. [Learner Assessment](#)
8. [Resources](#)
9. [EAL Literacy](#)
10. [Skills and Language for Work](#)
11. [Technology and Online Learning](#)
12. [Supporting Learners with Diverse Needs](#)
13. [Indigenization](#)
14. [2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion](#)
15. [Anti-Racism](#)

Once you have become comfortable with the basics covered in this chapter, the next step in your professional development can be to learn more about each of the content areas in the ATESL Best Practices document.

For support navigating the ATESL Best Practices, ask your Alberta Routes advisor about the ATESL Best Practices workshop.

Intercultural Communicative Competence in EAL Learning Environments

Intercultural Communicative Competence

“Culture is the knowledge, skills, beliefs, styles, traditions, norms, and values shared by a group of people” (Leask & Carroll, 2013, p.66).

Many people who are new to the study of intercultural communication believe that it mainly consists of learning about global cultures. Traditional clothing, food, rituals, and holidays are some of the visible elements of culture, but more consequential elements such as values, beliefs, and norms are invisible to the naked eye.

Rather than understanding and appreciating other cultures, the first step of developing intercultural communicative competence is understanding how our own culture shapes our view of the world, and the assumptions we make about what “good” or “proper” behaviour looks like.

As a start to our discussion of culture, examine this image:



Imagine that none of the people in the image are aware that they are wearing tinted glasses. It would be very difficult for the three of them to agree on the true appearance of anything. Each of them would (wrongly) assume that the others see exactly what they see, unaware of how the glasses are affecting how things appear.

Culture does something similar to our perception. We are often unaware of how the values, beliefs, and norms we were brought up with and around shape our assumptions about what is or should be *normal* or even *good*. It is often only when we encounter a cultural difference that we realize that what is normal and good is not universally agreed upon.

Understanding and accepting that our own perceptions and assumptions are shaped by culture is the first step in developing intercultural communicative competence. As you spend more time with individuals of varying cultural backgrounds, you should find yourself feeling curious rather than judgemental when you observe a behaviour that surprises you.

Best Practices for EAL Facilitators

Identifying Stereotypes and Implicit Bias

Stereotypes are assumptions made about all members of a specific group, including cultural, religious, or racial groups.

Stereotypes are harmful because they do not acknowledge differences between individuals within groups, and often cultivate a sense of superiority over stereotyped groups.

Most people are not aware of the stereotypes and associations they have regarding different people groups. Negative opinions and feelings toward groups of people often are hidden, even from the people who hold them. These hidden feelings are called *implicit bias*.

To understand your own stereotypes and implicit bias, consider taking the assessments found on the [Project Implicit](#) website. This may be an uncomfortable exercise, but to effectively dismantle bias and stereotypes we must first seek to recognize them in ourselves.

Embracing Curiosity

In the EAL classroom, it is likely that you will encounter learner behaviours that surprise you. Depending on the impact of the behaviour, you may be tempted to pass judgement on it quickly. This can be harmful to your relationship with the learner. It can be helpful to approach surprising behaviours with curiosity rather than judgement. Ask yourself, *is this behaviour the result of a cultural difference? If so, how can we make sure everyone is respected?*

Imagine a learner often avoids eye contact with you when you are having a conversation. In Canada, this is typically seen as a sign of dishonesty or disrespect. Your first reaction might be to request or demand that the learner make eye contact with you while you are speaking. However, it would be more helpful to say something like this:

I notice you don't make eye contact. Is this what most people do in your culture/home country? (learner answers) In Canada, many people make eye contact as a way of showing they are listening to the person they are speaking with.

Approaching the situation with questions rather than immediately forming an opinion can help you build and maintain the relationship with your learner.

Cultivating a Safe and Welcoming Classroom

Just like we discussed in the facilitation basics section, creating a positive classroom atmosphere is one of the most important things EAL facilitators can do. Part of this is making sure that learners' cultural backgrounds are validated and celebrated.

This can be done by:

- Ensuring that learners' names are learned and pronounced correctly
- Encouraging non-judgemental cultural comparisons
- Encouraging learners to share food, holiday customs, and other elements of their cultures with the class

At times, conflict can arise in the classroom due to the presence of cultures with different core values and beliefs. It is the facilitator's job to maintain a safe and respectful environment for all learners. For strategies that will help you maintain a respectful classroom environment, please review the section on managing disruptive behaviours section of this guide.

To Learn More

For more information and training on the topics of culture and intercultural communicative competence, ask your Alberta Routes advisor about the Intercultural Communicative Competence workshop series, Introduction to Intercultural Communication workshop, and Interrupting Bias workshop.

Other helpful resources for intercultural communicative competence include:

[Enhancing Intercultural Communicative Competence: A resource based on the ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework](#), ATESL

[Critical Incidents for Intercultural Communication in the Workplace](#), NorQuest College

[Intercultural Resources for Educators](#), NorQuest College

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the EAL Classroom

The Inclusive Facilitator

[Inclusion Action in Ontario](#) explains inclusion in the following way:

“Inclusion is a universal human right and its objective is to **accept, welcome and embrace all people** irrespective of race, gender, disability, medical or other need. Inclusion consists of the efforts and practices to ensure groups or individuals with different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted, and treated equally.”

Inclusion Action in Ontario

While intercultural communicative competence falls under the diversity, equity and inclusion umbrella, it is only one piece of a much larger picture.

“Intersectionality is the theory that the **overlap of various social identities**, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class, contributes to the specific type of systematic oppression and discrimination experienced by an individual.

Dictionary.com

Inclusive EAL instructors are reflective and take time to consider how their learners’ intersecting identities contribute to their experiences in and out of the classroom.

Fostering an Inclusive Classroom

When working toward an inclusive classroom, facilitators need to consider both how they can be inclusive and how they can foster inclusivity among learners.

To become an inclusive facilitator, you must begin to ask yourself *“how can I design lessons and courses that enable all learners to participate and that build belonging?”*

Key areas to consider when answering this question include:

- Accessibility of the classroom and materials for individuals with disabilities (visual impairment, restricted mobility, etc.)
- Accessibility of the classroom and materials for neurodiverse learners
- Accessibility of the class, technology, and materials for learners with low incomes
- Representation of minority groups in visuals, case studies, and other aspects of learning materials
- Cultural sensitivity of visuals, case studies, and other aspects of learning materials
- Presence of stereotypes in visuals, case studies, and other aspects of learning materials

Questions to answer when considering inclusivity among learners are:

- How will you handle learners displaying non-inclusive behaviours toward each other?
- How will you handle racist, homophobic, and other non-inclusive comments made during class time?
- Which behaviours will you “let slide” and which will you address?

Reference the section of this document on managing disruptive behaviours for guidance when answering these questions.

Key Learning Areas for Inclusivity

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are terms that relate to a variety of sub-categories that each merit further exploration. These areas include:

- Indigenization
- Anti-racism
- 2SLGBTQI+ allyship
- Inclusive language and communication
- Neurodiversity
- Microaggressions
- Power and privilege
- Psychological health and safety
- Unconscious bias
- Trauma-informed care

Ask your Alberta Routes advisor about the following workshops to increase your knowledge and capacity around these topics:

- Working with Trauma-Affected Learners.
- LGBTQ2+
- Elders Speak
- Supporting Learners with Mental Health Challenges
- Neurodiversity
- Interrupting Bias
- Anti-Racism
- Gender Diversity
- Accessibility in the EAL Classroom

The [Colbourne Institute for Inclusive Leadership](#) at NorQuest College has a wealth of resources that support professionals who wish to cultivate a more inclusive practice. View their resources section for workshops and materials.



Part 5: Continuing Your Learning

Setting Professional Development Goals

Professional Development

Continuing your learning will be a key aspect of becoming the best EAL coordinator or facilitator possible. This resource has provided a short introduction to many key knowledge areas that will greatly benefit your practice. However, you will need to dig deeper into each topic over time to truly become competent in each area. This can be done through building regular professional development into your working life. This will also be important for all staff and volunteers you supervise.

Professional development can take many forms. These include:

- Attending webinars and workshops
- Attending conferences
- Reading books and articles
- Joining professional development groups
- Taking courses
- Shadowing other facilitators or coordinators
- Attending study groups

Creating a Professional Development Plan

The most effective way to move your learning forward is to plan it well. Setting learning goals will give you direction and the ability to pace yourself. It is important to focus on one thing at a time to minimize your risk of overwhelming yourself. The following steps should be used to plan your professional development, and to provide your team with the training they need to be successful in their roles.

The five elements of a professional development plan are¹⁶:

1. Goal(s)

The first step in creating a professional development plan is to decide which knowledge area or skill you want to improve.

Example:

In six-months' time, I will have increased my confidence in creating and administering assessments of learning.

¹⁶ Adapted from: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/what-is-professional-development>

2. Assessment

To move in any direction, you need to understand where you are starting. Assessing your approximate knowledge and skill levels will make the steps toward your desired destination clearer.

Example:

On a 1-10 scale, I would rank my current confidence in creating and administering assessments at a 3. I would like to move this up to a 5 within six months.

3. Resources

The next step is to make a list of the resources you have access to or will need to accomplish your professional development goals. To get a clear picture of what is available to you, look at:

- Your organization's bookshelf
- The list of upcoming webinars on the Alberta Routes website
- The list of available Alberta Routes workshops that your organization could host for staff/volunteer development
- Details of upcoming conferences
- Professional mentorship opportunities

Decide which available resources will help you and your team reach your goals. Then, research any other resources you might need beyond those.

Example:

- *Alberta Routes offers an EAL assessment workshop.*
- *The literacy and learning symposium is offering an assessment track for breakout sessions.*
- *There are several books on assessment on our bookshelf.*

4. Strategy

Once you know what resources you will need to accomplish your learning goals, create a step-by-step plan of what you will do to take advantage of them.

Example:

Step 1: Ask Alberta Routes advisor to deliver assessment workshop.

Step 2: Plan to attend the assessment track breakout sessions at symposium.

Step 3: Read one chapter per week of assessment-related literature (books, articles, etc.)

5. Evaluation

Once you have participated in your learning activities, revisit your goals and initial assessment. Determine whether you reached your goals. If yes, set a new goal and complete the process again. If not, reflect on what didn't go to plan, refine your goals, resources, and strategy, and proceed with the same goal.

Example:

I attended both the webinar and breakout sessions but stopped doing my reading after about 4 weeks. I feel that I have increased my confidence to a level 4. I will begin scheduling reading time into my work calendar and continue with that goal until my confidence has increased to a 5. Then I will reevaluate.

Template

Goal:
Assessment: Current knowledge/skill rating: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Resources:
Strategy:

Evaluation:

Knowledge/skill rating after professional development activities:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Resources for Further Exploration

This is a compilation of the essential resources available within the following topic areas.

For a more complete list of resources, reference the [Alberta Routes ESL Resource Guide](#).

Canadian Language Benchmarks

[Canadian Language Benchmarks](#)

[CLB Can Do Statements](#)

[Canadian Language Benchmarks Online Self-Assessment](#)

Classroom Materials

Alberta Routes Resources

[Alberta Routes Tutor Handbook](#)

[Alberta Routes Multi-Level Handbook](#)

[Roots and Connections](#)

Various Topics

[Tutela.ca](#) has a resource bank with classroom materials and other resources for EAL professionals.

[Ellii.com](#) provides a subscription service. Customers can access hundreds of ready-to-use lessons on a variety of topics.

English for Work

[AWES.ca](#) has resources for teaching English and skills for the workplace.

[LINC Works](#) has hundreds of hours of lessons and materials for English for the workplace.

[Communicative Workplace English](#) is a twelve-week language curriculum for the workplace.

English for Healthcare

[Learning Language for Health](#) is a health-focused curriculum.

[Live & Learn Healthcare](#) is a resource bank.

Life in Canada

[Welcome to Canada](#) is a government-published resource for orienting newcomers to their new home.

Banking, Numeracy, and Finance

[English for Financial Literacy](#) is a banking, numeracy, and finance curriculum.

[Money Matters](#) resources are great resources for all Canadians, but also newcomers.

Online Language Practice

[English Accent Coach](#) provides instruction and activities for improving pronunciation.

[Duolingo](#) is a fun English learning app for at-home practice.

Facilitation Skills and Best Practices

The [ATESL Best Practices](#) provides statements of best practice for facilitation and other topics.

Intercultural Communicative Competence

The [ATESL Curriculum Framework](#) has a section on Intercultural Communicative Competence in the classroom.

ATESL's [Enhancing Intercultural Communicative Competence](#) project provides additional professional development for facilitators.

Skills for Success in the Language Classroom

[Language for Success](#) is a document that provides background information on using the Skills for Success in the language classroom.

ESL Literacy

[ESL Literacy Readers](#) are materials designed for literacy learners to practice their reading skills.

[ESL for Adult Literacy Learners](#) is a document that provides background and theory on teaching EAL literacy learners.

References

- Alberta Routes. (2021). *Alberta Routes Multi-Level Handbook*.
<https://albertaroutes.norquest.ca/getmedia/5a6de0f6-6a6a-4947-bfaa-512b13fb4573/September30TutorHandbook.pdf?ext=.pdf>
- Alberta Routes. (2023). *Developing Vocabulary in ESL Learners*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Routes. (2023). *ESL Assessment*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Routes. (2019). *Foundations for Task-Based Teaching*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Routes. (2021). *Foundations for Teaching Pronunciation*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Routes. (2024). *Starting or Inheriting an ESL Program*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Routes. (2019). *Lesson Planning Made Easy*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Routes. (2021). *Strategies for Teaching Grammar*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Routes. (2021). *Strategies for Teaching Listening*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Routes. (2022). *Strategies for Teaching Reading*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Routes. (2022). *Strategies for Teaching Speaking*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Routes. (2023). *Strategies for Teaching Writing*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Routes. (2022). *Teaching ESL Literacy Learners*. Norquest College.
- Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL). (2011). *ATESL curriculum framework*.
<https://www.atesl.ca/documents/1448/Introduction.pdf>

- Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL). (2009). *Best practices for adult ESL and LINC programming in Alberta*.
https://www.atesl.ca/documents/1366/ATESL_Best_Practices.pdf
- Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (2012). *Canadian language benchmarks*.
<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/pub/language-benchmarks.pdf>
- Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (2013). *Canadian language benchmarks can do statements*. https://www.ecala.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CLB_Can_Do_Statements_web.pdf
- Deliver – Skills for Success Practitioner Tools & resources. (n.d.). <https://sfs-tools.ca/competency-framework/deliver/?tab=1>
- Education, S. (2020, September 22). *What Is the Affective Filter, and Why Is it Important in the Classroom?* Seidlitz Education. <https://seidlitzblog.org/2020/09/22/what-is-the-affective-filter-and-why-is-it-important-in-the-classroom/>
- Inclusion Action In Ontario. (2023, June 26). *What is inclusion? - Inclusion action in Ontario*. Inclusion Action in Ontario - an Inclusive Education Is the Foundation for an Inclusive Life. <https://inclusionactionontario.ca/what-is-inclusion/>
- Indeed Editorial Team. (2023). *What is professional Development? Definition and Examples*. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/what-is-professional-development>
- Krashen, S. D. (1986). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Leask, B., Carroll, J., The Office for Learning and Teaching, & International Education Association of Australia. (2013). *Learning and teaching across cultures*. International Education Association of Australia (IEAA), Melbourne. <https://ieaa.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Research%20Publications/2013/PUB-IEAA-Learning-and-Teaching-Across-Cultures-Quick-Guide.pdf>
- Nmcteam. (2022, December 1). *Adjusting Our Talk with ELLs*. Collaborative Classroom. <https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/blog/adjusting-our-talk-with-ells/>

Peterson, D. (2019, July 3). *Tips to Manage Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom*. ThoughtCo. <https://www.thoughtco.com/manage-disruptive-behavior-in-classroom-31634>

Plain language, accessibility, and inclusive communications - Privy Council Office. (2024, April 11). Canada.ca. <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/topics/government-communications/communications-community-office/communications-101-boot-camp-canadian-public-servants/plain-language-accessibility-inclusive-communications.html>

Plainlanguage.gov | Checklist for plain language. (n.d.). <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/checklists/checklist/>

Vygotsky, L. 1978. *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [Google Scholar](#)

Images

Alberta Workforce Essential Skills. (2021). *Skills for Success*.

<https://awes.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Skills-for-Success.jpg>

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (2012). *Canadian language benchmarks*.

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/pub/language-benchmarks.pdf>

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (2013). *Canadian language benchmarks can do statements*.

https://www.ecala.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CLB_Can_Do_Statements_web.pdf

[Computer] by OpenClipart-Vectors, Pixabay license available at

<https://pixabay.com/service/terms/>

[Discussion] by manfredsteger, Pixabay license available at

<https://pixabay.com/service/terms/>

[Ear] by Clker-Free-Vector-Images, Pixabay license available at

<https://pixabay.com/service/terms/>