# GUIDELINES FOR RECEPTION, INITIAL ASSESSMENT, PLACEMENT, AND MONITORING OF EAL AND LAL LEARNERS

*(Information taken from Curriculum Framework for English and an Additional Language (EAL) and Literacy, Academics, and Language (LAL) Programming, June 2011 Draft – Section 7: Assessment of EAL and LAL Learners. Available at www.edu.gov.mb.ca)*

Regardless of whether a school receives one EAL student or hundreds, it needs to establish appropriate EAL programming and maintain a student monitoring system that extends from entry to exit. This will ensure that the needs of these learners are addressed appropriately and effectively throughout their English language acquisition and development. School staff – subject-area teachers, educational planning, and monitoring of EAL learners – need to base decisions on the most accurate information available about students' educational and life experiences. The information, guidelines, and support materials (including sample templates) provided here will assist with the initial reception, assessment, short- and long-term educational planning (including adapting the Senior Years curriculum), and monitoring the progress of EAL and LAL learners.

## RECEPTION AND ORIENTATION

When EAL students first arrive in a school, it is important that as much information as possible be shared by the student, family and school. School personnel who make the first contact with new families should be aware of the reception protocol and be prepared to welcome them.

Orientation information may include:

- Basic information about the school community and the structure of the school day and year
- The names of the principal, the classroom/subject-area teachers, and the EAL teacher, where available
- The telephone numbers of the school, of relevant community organizations, and of bilingual contact persons and interpreter services
- A description of support services available from the school division
- A description of important school norms and rules, such as those outlined in the code of conduct (including the dress code), and information about lunch times and facilities, bus schedules, and emergency procedures
- A description of the Manitoba school system
- Information about the roles and responsibilities of parents in Manitoba schools

Allow ample time for the reception interview to give students and parents a chance to feel comfortable and to begin building a trusting relationship.

The classroom teacher, the EAL teacher, or designated person should introduce the new learner to classroom learning partners or learner guides, including, if possible, some who speak the newcomer's language and who will help orient the learner to the school and its routine. Some of the things that students need to know include the following:

- Washroom location
- How to find particular places in the school
- Time allotted for various activities, such as recess, lunch, class change
- How to find their way to their class or to another location where they can go if they are lost or feeling unsure (a card with a room number and name can be helpful)
- The names of a few key adults and students
- The location of siblings' classrooms
-  How to open and close their lockers
- School expectations about absences, lates, notes, dress code and behaviour

- Lunch and breaks – location, procedures
- Getting home – bus, walking route, location of a phone
- School supplies

## INITIAL IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the initial assessment is to determine appropriate programming needs by gathering critical and detailed information about each learner's educational background and level of proficiency in English and/or the first or dominant language.  The gathering of student information is important because it provides schools and teachers with important insights or factors that can affect student success.

Note that, although students need to be registered and placed in classes as quickly as possible, it is preferable to have a short delay to ensure that a thorough and accurate initial assessment can be made than to have a placement based on insufficient information.  Either the family or the school should arrange for an interpreter, and, where possible, have relevant documents translated.  Ideally, initial assessment information should be gathered formally and informally over a period of one or two weeks.  For elementary learners, a more thorough assessment of language and learning may occur after they are placed in an age appropriate classroom.  Observation of learners as they participate in reading and writing tasks and in mathematics activities, interact with peers, and respond to new tasks and learning situations will provide important information about learner development and language competence.  However, educational planning for Senior Years students' needs to be done after the initial assessment because appropriate courses must be selected.

During the initial assessment, a designated member of the reception team (often the EAL or resource teacher) collects initial background information about the learner.  This process should include the review of any educational documents that the learner may bring or may be able to access.  If documents are not accessible, information should be gathered about previous schooling and/or the parents/guardians, including details of the number of years of schooling completed and any significant interruptions in the learner's education (e.g., in the case of refugees).  Immigration documents should be requested to be certain of the student's residency status.  The family should be asked to provide the name of a relative or friend who speaks English so the school has an emergency contact.

In addition to information about cultural background, educational and family background, there are other important factors concerning a student's background that need to be considered because they may affect learning. Such factors include their

- Level of proficiency in English
- Proficiency in other languages, especially first- or dominant literacy
- Prior schooling experience (e.g., whether their school has been interrupted)
- Refugee or immigration experiences
- Trauma due to war or other factors
- Health, physical and other characteristics that may affect learning
- Interests and skills
- Long-term educational or career goals