Key messages to help identify English language learners (ELLs) at enrolment

MOE priorities

Priority 1 in the Ministry of Education’s Statement of Intent is to improve education outcomes for Māori learners, Pasifika learners, learners with special education needs, and learners from low socio-economic backgrounds. Students who are English language learners - ELLs - are represented in all of these learner groups.

Gathering information about ELLs

The New Zealand Curriculum makes it clear that schools are required to “gather information that is sufficiently comprehensive to enable evaluation of student progress and achievement; to identify students and groups of students ... who are at risk of not achieving” (page 44). The ELLs group is diverse and includes students from overseas and New Zealand born students.

To assist in accurately identifying English language learners’ language strengths and needs, the following approaches are recommended. These may be included in your policy.

Appropriate staff, who understand and have familiarity with the processes involved in learning an additional language, should attend the enrolment meeting. This is generally the teacher in charge of ELLs.

A trained interpreter is employed when required, to ensure all relevant information is able to be given to, and received by, the student and their family. Possible contacts for these services include: http://www.interpret.org.nz and http://ethnicaffairs.govt.nz/browse/language-line.

Accurately assessing the English language proficiency of a new student will require appropriate assessments by a trained ELLs specialist teacher. This needs to happen before final class placement and timetable decisions are made. However, changes may be needed as a student’s learning develops and his/her strengths and needs are monitored.

It is important to establish proficiency levels in first language/s to establish bi- and multi-lingual strengths. With whānau/family, establish other learning strengths and needs especially as some learners will need multiple levels of support.

Secondary students at ELLP Stage 2 or below will need intensive specialist language support to access the curriculum at age-appropriate levels. Students at ELLP Stage 3 will be able to access the curriculum more easily with scaffolded support. Funding for this support will come primarily from the school’s operations grant and may be supplemented by MOE ESOL funding and money from international fee-payers.