Key messages to support English language learners

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 are represented in all of these learner groups.

**English language learners (ELLs) are not a homogeneous group. The ELLs group may include:**

- students from migrant and refugee backgrounds
- NZ-born students from homes where a language other than English is spoken
- students from bilingual education settings e.g. students transitioning from kura to English medium-learning environments
- international fee paying students.

**Questions for school leaders:**

*Do you know who the bilingual learners are in your faculty/department/classes/school/region?*
*Are you confident the strengths and needs of all ELLs are identified in each class?*
*Are you confident the learning needs of all ELLs are being met?*

**Key messages:**

- Students who are strong in their own languages, cultures and identities have an advantage in negotiating the complexities of a globalised world
- Students learn social English more quickly than academic English (Cummins 2002). It is very easy to overlook the academic language learning needs of ELLs who are reasonably competent with social English
- ELLs need support to acquire the academic language for learning at their year group curriculum level. The diagram represents the ‘pace of progress’ that is required
- With good scaffolding, ELLs can succeed academically in a language they have yet to master
- Teachers need an understanding of the patterns and pathways of progress for ELLs acquiring English as an additional language in order to make appropriate and sound teaching decisions for them.

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