

Helping Your Child Acquire English Language Skills



Part 1

“The purpose of ESL/ELL services is to assist students to become proficient in English, to develop both intellectually and as citizens, and to achieve the expected learning outcomes of the provincial curriculum.”

BC Ministry of Education



“Helping Your Child Acquire English Language Skills, Part 1”

This brochure is one in a series sponsored by the VSB SWIS program and produced collectively by a group of ESL/ELL teachers and the VSB MCLW team.



This project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

Coming to a new country and learning in a new language is a challenge. Students benefit from receiving support, encouragement, and understanding from parents and family members, as well as teachers.

Learning a New Language

Each child learns a new language at his or her rate. It will benefit your child if you understand that:

- learning a new language is very hard work and is tiring.
- listening, speaking, reading, and writing are not acquired at the same rate. Listening and speaking skills often develop before reading and writing skills.

- social language (everyday face to face conversation) is learned more quickly than academic language.
- academic language (textbook language) takes a lot longer to fully develop. It can take up to 10 years.
- a silent period is very common when learning a new language, but learners are still taking in and processing the language around them.
- students learn the new language quickly at first, then reach a point where little progress seems to be made. This is a normal part of learning a new language.

Research shows that the more learners practice their English skills, the more quickly they become competent at using both social and academic language.

What can I do?

You can help by:

- being patient.
- understanding that learning a new language takes time and practice.
- showing your child that you think learning English is important.
- being interested in and talking with your child about what they are learning and doing in school, clubs, and other activities.
- talking with your child about how they are feeling at school.
- reassuring your child that it takes time to learn English well.

Strong home language skills help build strong English skills.

Helping with Reading and Writing

To specifically help your child with reading and writing skills in English, you can:

- read to show that you value reading.
- read aloud to each other.
- encourage the reading of both fiction and non-fiction books. Also, most libraries have sections of non-English reading materials to choose from. Have your child ask the librarian to help find age appropriate and language appropriate books.
- learn about special library programs such as:
 - book talks;
 - summer reading programs;
 - drama groups;
 - homework clubs;
 - tutoring programs;
 - internet programs, etc.

- encourage your child to keep a diary.
- have your child write stories, poems, etc., in English and in your home language.
- have your child write to friends and relatives.

Many of the activities described in this brochure will be useful for you as well as your child. By practicing together you can help your child gain a better knowledge of English and you can both feel more comfortable using your new language.



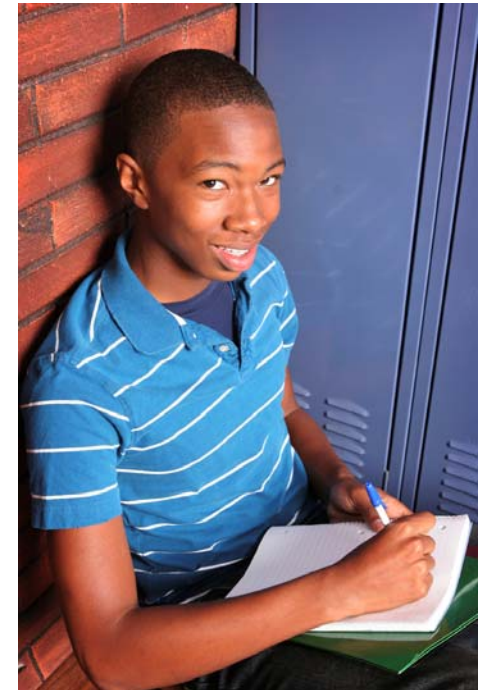
“Helping Your Child Acquire English Language Skills, Part 1”

This brochure is one in a series sponsored by the VSB SWIS program and produced collectively by a group of ESL/ELL teachers and the VSB MCLW team.



This project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

Helping Your Child Acquire English Language Skills



Part 2

Moving to a new country creates challenges for both adults and children. One of the biggest challenges is learning to communicate in a new language.

Your attitude towards learning in a new language has a great impact on your child's attitude.

In addition to your attitudes and knowledge about language learning there are many ways that you, as parents, can help your child, and yourselves.

You can use your home language and/or English to do the activities described in this booklet.

Also see other brochure, "Ways You Can Support Your Child's Learning at Home."

Helping your child acquire English language skills will depend on:

Your child's age;

- Older children have different needs and respond to parental support differently than younger children.

Your child's language ability in English;

- Those who are just beginning to learn English need different kinds of support than those who already have some English skills.

Your child's reading and writing skills in the home language;

- When children have these skills in their home language, they acquire them in their new language more easily.

Your child's attitude toward the home culture and language;

- When their home language is valued, learning a new language is not as threatening.

You can also support your child by:

- showing that you value learning.
- learning English yourself.
- being patient.

- attending school events.
- taking your child on trips to museums, historical sites, and cultural events to learn more about your new country.

Helping with Listening and Speaking

To specifically help your child with listening and speaking skills in English you can:

- help them learn the names of common objects around your home and neighbourhood.
- go for walks and practice reading street signs, house numbers, names of stores, etc.
- practice using common English greetings.
- talk with them about what they are learning.
- provide taped books and CD's of books from the library so they can listen to stories in English. Recorded books can include fiction and non-fiction and are at different levels of difficulty.
- encourage participation in extracurricular activities at school.
- encourage participation in activities offered by community centres, youth clubs, and other social organizations.

There are also many useful internet sites that will help with learning English. These sites offer a variety of ways to practice English and build vocabulary.

Your child's teacher or the school librarian will be able to help you find the best sites.

