



**Regina  
Catholic Schools**  
[www.rcsd.ca](http://www.rcsd.ca)

# **EAL**

**English as an Additional Language  
Elementary Schools**



## **Students Learning**

### **English as an Additional Language**

The Regina Catholic School Division welcomes students and families from around the world. Our school division values the cultural and linguistic diversity of all students attending our schools. We are committed to providing the highest quality of educational services to all students, including support for students learning English as an Additional Language. As a Catholic School Division, our key priority is to nurture students on their faith journey. We strive to create schools that are centres of love.

We base our educational programs on Saskatchewan Ministry of Education curricula within the context of Catholic Education. We collaborate with many community organizations and non-profit groups to provide Pre-school and Before/After school programs in our schools. We serve over 10,000 students from Prekindergarten to Grade 12 and offer a full range of curricular and extra-curricular options.

We serve students in 25 elementary schools and 4 high schools throughout the city of Regina. Learning Support includes EAL Support from EAL teachers who help students develop their English language skills. The Students are able to attend schools in their neighbourhood where they learn English and curriculum at the same time in a regular supportive classroom.

## **EAL Learners**

Students who are learning English as an additional language are speakers of other languages who are adding English to their language repertoire. These students may have a wide range of backgrounds. They may have moved to Canada from another country and be fluent in a language other than English, or they may speak a dialect of English that is different from that spoken in Canada.

Keep in mind that students born in Canada may also be learning English as an additional language. Some First Nations and Francophone students may speak a language other than English in their home and community. Immigrant families may continue to speak their first language in the home and with family and friends, and their Canadian-born children may come to school knowing some or no English. These children may or may not have developed language proficiency in their home language.

### **Acquisition of**

### **English as an Additional Language**

Acquisition of English as an Additional Language Research has shown that it takes five to seven years for EAL learners to approach levels of fluency that are similar to their English first language peers. This means that, even though a student may have been living in Canada for several years, she/he may still be learning English and may need EAL support.

## BICS and CALP

It is important to distinguish between social language acquisition and academic language acquisition. Cummins (1979) makes the distinction between these two different kinds of language proficiency. Social language can be thought of as conversational skills, often referred to as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). This everyday conversational language generally takes from one to two years to learn and is adequate for day-to-day social interactions. However, BIC skills are not complex enough to support academic learning. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) involves the more complex, specific vocabulary and language structures needed to learn and express academic concepts. This conceptual language often takes from five to seven years to develop, and possibly longer for some students.

BICS	CALP
The language used for daily living	The language used for education & instruction
Includes everyday conversational English, high frequency words (Tier 1 words)	Involves content (subject specific) vocab. Achieved by being immersed in content area study
May take two to three years to become proficient	May take five to seven years to become proficient
Focus on fluency rather than grammatical accuracy	Focus is on development of both fluency and accuracy

For additional information, see

## BICS and CALP

### Importance of First Language Use

Although it is important to support English language acquisition, it is also important to encourage students and families to continue using their first language. A person's first language is the foundation for new languages. Children learning an additional language build on this foundation and transfer what they know about their first language to their new language. Students can also use their first language to help them learn academic content, even if they are not yet fluent in English. For example, students who can read in their first language can learn academic concepts by reading and writing about them in their first language. Once they understand the concept, they can focus on learning the associated vocabulary in English.

### Common Framework of Reference CFR

The CFR is a language scale that displays language growth along a continuum. It identifies ways in which learners at various levels of proficiency use language to perform meaningful, authentic tasks in the areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

The CFR is a strong indicator of the amount of additional language support a student may require to understand and achieve the outcomes of a subject fully.

The CFR provides a “road map” that shows the learner’s journey toward proficiency in an additional language. It can be used to track progress over time and encourage students to understand and take responsibility for their own language learning.

The CFR framework can also be used as a visual organizer for parents to understand their child’s academic language learning.

The CFR contains six levels, ranging from the beginner level (A1) to the highest level of language proficiency (C2). For the purposes of EAL support in Saskatchewan schools, the focus for learners is on the first three levels of the CFR scale (A1, A2, and B1), which are further divided into A1.1, A1.2, A2.1, A2.2, B1.1, and B1.2. A learner who has moved beyond B1.2 has developed a level of proficiency that is comparable to that of English first language peers, allowing the learner to work more independently on improving language proficiency.

Moving from B1.2 into B2 is a significant transition point for learners of EAL. When exiting B1.2, learners will have

reached a level of proficiency that allows them to work more independently on improving language proficiency within the context of language instruction.

Regina Catholic Schools use the CFR levels to report on student progress and guide instruction. EAL teachers are required to assess language acquisition and submit CFR levels at specific times during the school year. On-going assessment is expected to ensure that instructional approaches adjust to student learning needs as they change over the course of the school year.

### **How long will a learner of EAL spend at each level?**

The length of time at each level cannot be predicted. There is no school year equivalency. Because of a range of factors (e.g., prior English exposure, previous education, motivation), each learner will progress at a different rate, with some students progressing rapidly, some making smaller strides forward despite significant explicit instruction and support, while others may appear ‘stuck’ at a particular level for many months, requiring even more support and explicit instruction. For example, assessments may indicate that spoken production is weak in comparison to the writing skills of the learner.



## Snapshot of Language Ability at Various CFR Levels Basic User

<b>Basic User</b>		
<b>A1</b>	<b>A1.1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands and uses familiar words and very basic phrases to satisfy personal needs.</li> <li>• Can make simple introductions, answer questions about personal details (name, age, location, family members) or personal items.</li> </ul>
	<b>A1.2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</li> <li>• Shows limited ability to use simple grammatical structures, e.g., punctuation, capitalization, sentence patterns.</li> </ul>
<b>A2</b>	<b>A2.1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands sentences and basic information relevant to personal needs and family activities.</li> <li>• Can communicate about simple, routine tasks requiring a direct exchange of information on familiar or daily matters.</li> </ul>
	<b>A2.2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can describe in a simple language his/her background, immediate environment, interests or activities.</li> <li>• Uses some simple structures accurately, but continues to systematically exhibit basic errors, e.g., verb tenses, use of prepositions, articles.</li> </ul>
<b>Independent User</b>		
<b>B1</b>	<b>B1.1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the main points of clear standard speech about familiar topics.</li> <li>• Produces simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest.</li> </ul>
	<b>B1.2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can describe experiences or events and can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.</li> <li>• Uses reasonably accurate structures and patterns within routine or predictable situations.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from “A Guide to Using the Common Framework of Reference”. 2013. Government of Saskatchewan. Ministry of Education.)

## **Pre-K and Kindergarten**

- In most schools, EAL teachers provide consultative support to Prekindergarten and Kindergarten teachers with EAL students in their classrooms.
- EAL in-class support for PreK and Kindergarten students may be offered in collaboration with the speech-language pathologist and the classroom teacher on a six-week rotational basis. Students participate in centre-based activities designed to develop oral language skills.
- Oral language development sessions are offered on Family Days by the EAL Consultant or EAL teacher, the speech-language pathologists and PreK teachers. These sessions are especially designed according to the needs in individual schools.

## **Grades 1-8**

EAL programming is determined by the individual student's strengths, needs, identified by frequent, and on-going assessment, and is guided by the CFR level descriptors.

### **Pull-Out Support**

EAL classes are offered in small group settings and are designed to increase students' understanding of English grammar and vocabulary and a focus on developing communication skills. Classes are generally 30 minutes long.

The number of sessions per week depends on the student's level of English proficiency and the amount of EAL time assigned to the school.

Group size is determined by the number of students at a similar CFR level and the amount of EAL time available at the school. Group sizes typically range from three to ten students.

### **In-Class Support**

EAL teachers may also provide some in-class EAL support, arranged in collaboration with the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher focuses on content instruction, and the EAL teacher provides language support to the EAL students in the class based on the lesson content.

### **Language and Culture**

In addition to language teaching, programming for EAL students includes a cultural component. Culture and language are intertwined, and knowledge of the culture associated with a language helps the learner gain a deeper understanding of the language and language usage. It also assists newcomers to Canada, and Saskatchewan make a smooth transition to their new country, culture, and language. This includes learning about school in Saskatchewan, holiday themes, outings in the community (such as the Natural History Museum), and so on.

