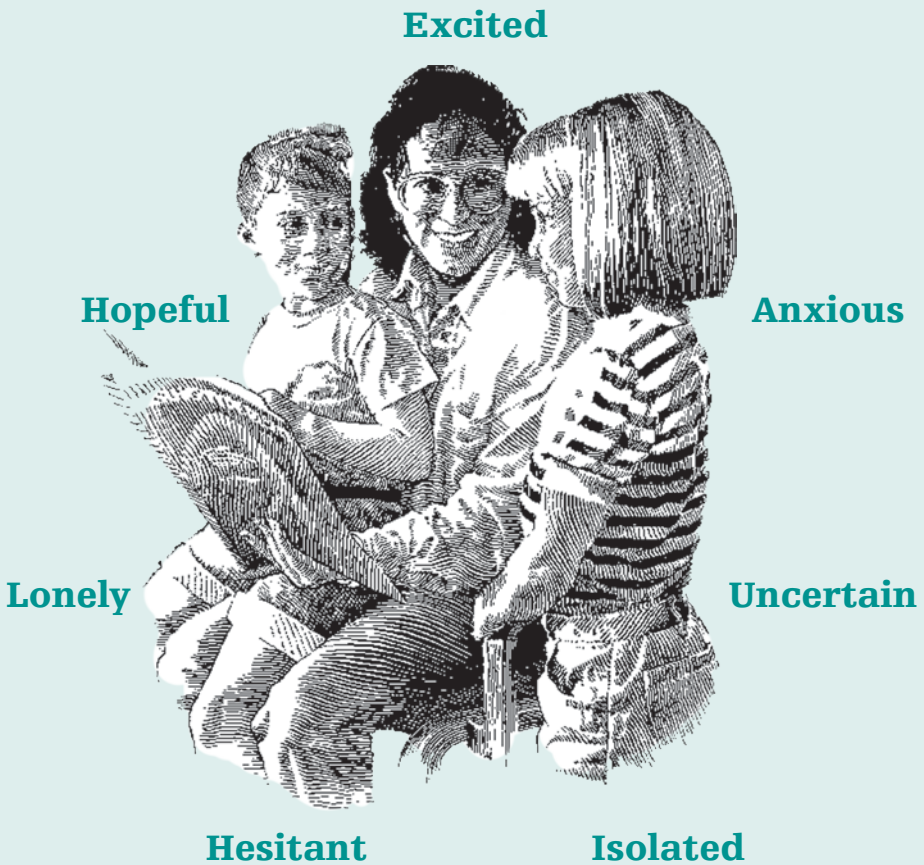


Understanding ESL Learners: Meeting Needs in the Classroom

May I tell you who I really am?



The purpose of this pamphlet is to assist classroom teachers in meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

- For more information, contact the English as a Second Language Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association.

Experience

Pressures

First Language
DevelopmentPersonality,
Abilities, Interests,
Learning Styles

Previous So

Traditions and Celebrations

ESL

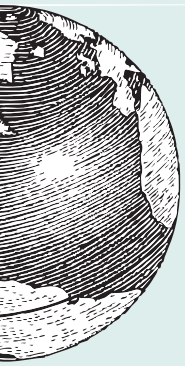
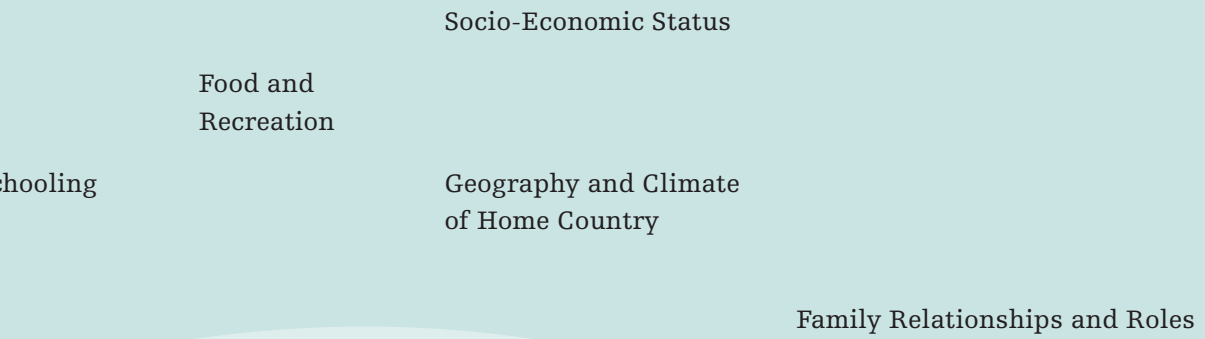


Teacher/Classroom

- value the whole child—all students bring rich experiences, abilities and potential
- allow use of mother tongue and encourage pride in students' own culture through first language journal writing and library books
- allow for settling-in time and recognize some students may not be ready to interact for several months
- allow wait-time for responses
- speak as naturally as possible but avoid complex structures and idioms
- modify content to meet the students' needs and interests
- encourage collaboration and interaction
- use cooperative learning techniques
- maintain continuity in classroom routines
- use a variety of graphic organizers, hands-on and concrete instructional materials
- enhance program with multicultural materials (maps, flags, pictures, stories)



BACKGROUND



STUDENT

School/Community

- welcome the family into the school community
- create a safe, risk-taking environment
- encourage participation in school sports, events, clubs, activities
- provide opportunities to develop friendships
- encourage involvement of outside agencies
- inform parents about relevant cultural associations and community events
- use peer tutors and peer support groups
- invite school councils to play a significant role

ENVIRONMENT



There is no quick fix, or one course or textbook that can be used for teaching English as a Second Language. Language is used in meaningful situations and for specific purposes. Language learning depends on age, background, interests, previous schooling and current needs. Accept errors as natural in the learning process. REMEMBER that it is imperative to provide a supportive environment to enhance second language learning.

A LETTER TO MY TEACHER

I am a student whose first language is not English. To help me adjust to Canadian ways, may I make a few suggestions:

- I am proud of my name. Please let me help you say and spell it correctly.
- Since I miss my friends from my home country, I would feel more secure with a buddy as a mentor and school tour guide.
- Don't assume I know all about your school system—instead familiarize me with the schedules and routines (late slips, fire bells, absences, lunch hours, celebrations, assemblies).

Our family values education and would like to be helpful and supportive. Although I know learning another language and adjusting to a new culture may be long and difficult, I will strive to do my best.

Signed,
Your World Citizen

Further Reading:

Eckes, Mary and Law, Barbara. 1990. *The More Than Just Surviving Handbook: ESL for Every Classroom Teacher*. Peguis Publishers, Winnipeg, MB. (ISBN 0920541984)

Kagan, Spencer. 1992. *Cooperative Learning: Resources for Teachers*. Kagan Cooperative Learning, 27134 Paseo Espada, Suite 302, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675. (ISBN 1879097109)

Meyers, Mary. 1993. *Teaching to Diversity: Teaching and Learning in the Multi-Ethnic Classroom*. Irwin Publishing, Concord, ON. (ISBN 0772519587)

Other pamphlets published by the ATA include:

- Understanding ESL Learners: Distinguishing Between BICS and CALP
- Understanding ESL Learners: Teaching in the Content Areas

