

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPECTED PRACTICES

AT GEMS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



EDUCATION



مدرسة جيمس الدولية - شارع الخيل  
GEMS International School  
AL KHAIL

## INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

English proficiency or fluency is not a pre-requisite for enrollment at GIS. Students who are beginning or not yet proficient in the language are supported by the ELL (English Language Learning) program. ELL is available to students in Grade 1 to Grade 5. GIS has a team of specialist ELL teachers and is committed to providing English support to our vibrant community of language learners.

The ELL Team aims to empower students to learn the English skills necessary to function academically, thrive socially, and grow as multilingual global citizens.

The English as an Additional Language (ELL) program at GEMS International School recognises the contribution of international students to the education of all students. In the context of our rapidly changing world, the interaction between students of different geographical, national, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds provides the basis for future understanding and cooperation. The common task of learning English as an additional language unites ELL students in their academic pursuits and at the same time provides them with the skills to interact with the larger English-speaking community of the world.

The ELL program encourages students' own individualities and appreciation of their own culture and language, while giving them the skills they need to fully benefit from the learning opportunities

available in the larger school community.

The ELL program develops both basic interpersonal communicative skills - (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiencies (CALP) so that the students will be capable of working in the language of the classroom and curriculum. BICS are language skills needed to interact in social situations, for example, when speaking to a friend on the telephone and refers primarily to context-bound, face-to-face communication which is used in everyday social interaction. CALP refers to more abstract communication that takes place in the classroom, starting in elementary grades. CALP involves the "language of learning", which enables children to problem-solve, hypothesize, imagine, reason and project into situations with which they have no personal experience. It is a prerequisite for learning to read and write and for overall academic success.



## ELL TEACHING MODEL: OUR PHILOSOPHY

The implications of the BICS and CALP concepts for children are that the language of instruction needs to be sufficiently well developed for her or him to be able to meet the cognitive demands of the academic setting. Students typically are thought to acquire BICS within about two years of initial exposure to a new language but take at least five years to develop the CALP needed to be on the same level with their native speaking counterparts in the classroom.

The ELL program at GIS is for these students who need extra support to effectively use the English language. In this program, students are provided with intensive instruction in listening, speaking, reading, writing and comprehending English. This intensive English language instruction is delivered by highly qualified ELL teachers who are trained in recognising and working with language differences. Students who are learning or still improving their English also receive support from teachers and teaching assistants in the regular classroom.

All teaching staff of English Language Learners at GIS share a common commitment to the development of the language skills of ELL students. There are three goals for limited English proficient students in GIS's ELL program:

- *To use English to communicate in social settings.*
- *To use English to achieve academically in all content areas.*
- *To use English to function in culturally appropriate ways and grow as multilingual global citizens.*

The KG learning environment is a language-rich context where all children learn to read and write together whether English is their first or second - or third! - language. We do not provide ELL pull-out support for students in KG 1 or KG 2.

### LITERACY IN ELL - HOW IT LOOKS

At GIS we believe that EVERY child should have support from a balanced literacy program.

Our team of ELL teachers work hard to support students who are in the early stages of acquisition but we also provide small group instruction to students who struggle with reading and writing or those students who could benefit from a little extra practice. The 5 components of Balanced Literacy that we consider when supporting our students are:

*TEACHER MODELLING  
SHARING THE LEARNING  
GUIDING THE LEARNING  
APPLYING THE LEARNING  
WORD STUDY*

In order to get the appropriate balance in balanced literacy, teachers make thoughtful decisions about the best way to help our students become more skillful readers and writers. Using all of the components for reading and writing, connecting them meaningfully, whenever possible, into the unit of inquiry and understanding the personalized needs of each student will support the Balanced Literacy approach at GIS.

# IDENTIFYING AND PLACING ELL STUDENTS

FROM ADMISSIONS TO CLASSROOM PLACEMENTS

**A**LL STUDENTS APPLYING for admission to GIS are screened to see if any support is needed. We identify students through interviews, placement assessments and use of student reports from previous schools. If Admissions screening determines that a student may need ELL support, then a full English Assessment (WIDA) is administered to determine the specific level of English support required. Parents are then notified that support will be needed in order to help their child access the English curriculum. Our primary assessment tool - called WIDA - can be administered up to three times a year and places students into one of 5 proficiency levels based on their abilities in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

6- Reaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas at grade level</li> <li>a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade level</li> <li>oral or written communication in English comparable to English-proficient peers</li> </ul>
5- Bridging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>specialized or technical language of the content areas</li> <li>a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays or reports</li> <li>oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English-proficient peers when presented with grade level material</li> </ul>
4- Expanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>specific and some technical language of the content areas</li> <li>a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences or paragraphs</li> <li>oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication when presented with oral or written connected discourse with sensory, graphic or interactive support</li> </ul>
3- Developing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>general and some specific language of the content areas</li> <li>expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs</li> <li>oral or written language with phonological, syntactic or semantic errors that may impede the communication, but retain much of its meaning, when presented with oral or written, narrative or expository descriptions with sensory, graphic or interactive support</li> </ul>
2- Beginning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>general language related to the content areas</li> <li>phrases or short sentences</li> <li>oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one- to multiple-step commands, directions, questions, or a series of statements with sensory, graphic or interactive support</li> </ul>
1- Entering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas</li> <li>words, phrases or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, WH-, choice or yes/no questions, or statements with sensory, graphic or interactive support</li> <li>oral language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede meaning when presented with basic oral commands, direct questions, or simple statements with sensory, graphic or interactive support</li> </ul>

## TYPES OF SUPPORT

LANGUAGE PULL-OUT, IN-CLASS SUPPORT & MONITORING

GIS's ELL Elementary Department offers two kinds of support for students.

### Language Pull-Out

This support is for learners who are very new to English and cannot use or understand much English. These students spend the majority of their day in their regular classroom but are pulled out once or twice a day - normally during Language periods. These students often score between 1 and a 3 on the WIDA proficiency scale.

### In-Class support

In-class support happens when ELL teachers go to students in their mainstream class to help them with language, class activities, and summative tasks. These students often score 3 or higher on the WIDA proficiency scale. At GIS we usually support students at this level for one full academic year and then classroom teachers become primarily responsible for students learning in and about English.

# ASSESSMENT AND REPORTS

FORMAL AND INFORMAL ASSESSMENTS: TRACKING STUDENT GROWTH

### WIDA

Assessment and reporting for ELL is the responsibility of the ELL teacher and the homeroom teacher. All students are assessed at least twice a year for language proficiency using our formal testing tool, WIDA. ELL students also participate in regular testing and leveling that is part of GIS' assessment calendar.

### MAP TESTING:

MAP is an acronym for *Measures of Academic Progress* and GIS students from Grades 1 - 5 are tested three times a year on Reading, Language Use, Math and Science. ELL teachers and homeroom teachers use the data

from MAP testing to help them in creating lessons that are challenging and differentiated. Students who are new to English do not take the MAP test.

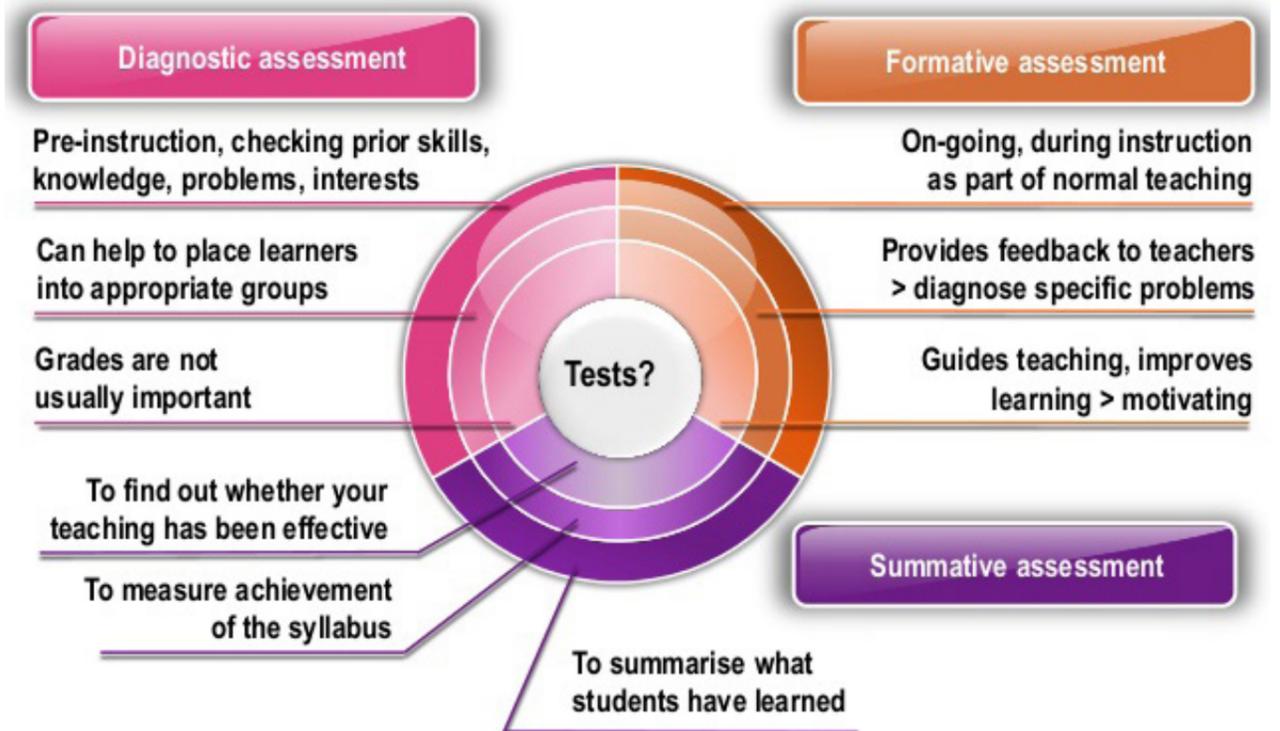
### GIS LANGUAGE SCOPE AND SEQUENCE:

Three times a year the ELL teacher will work with homeroom teachers and the GIS language continuum to formulate a report card grade for students receiving pull-out English support. Homeroom teachers will fill out the continuum for students who receive in-class support. The teacher who spends the most contact time during language lessons is responsible for assessing and reporting.

### OTHER ASSESSMENTS:

There are many ways for teachers and parents to see and to track student progress. ELL students will have their reading, comprehension and vocabulary/spelling tested, as needed, through Fountas and Pinell, Words Their Way and Quick Writes.

GIS embraces the PYP philosophy of helping all students become "inquirers, thinkers, communicators, risk takers, knowledgeable, principled, caring, open-minded, well-balanced, and reflective" and this process is often made evident through anecdotal notes, classroom observations and summative tasks.



**ELL Exit Process**

In order to be considered for exit from the pull-out program, students must score an overall 3 or above in the ELL Exit Assessment in all four language strands:

- a. Oral Assessment
- b. Listening Assessment
- c. Reading Assessment
- d. Writing Assessment

Most students require a full year of intensive pull-out support but some exit in just one semester while others may need support for up to two years.

Our language program at GIS is structured around the belief that “every teacher is a language teacher” and is capable of providing high-quality, differentiated language teaching to all of their students. For this reason, ELL students are only pulled out of their classrooms in the early stages of their English learning. Learners usually exit back to their mainstream classes when we see that their English is “Developing - Stage 3” (For Elementary) or “Expanding - Stage 4” (for Secondary). At this point they are capable of working with limited support inside the mainstream classes.



## RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

*Here are a few of the main resources we use to help us assess, level and teach our ELL students*

**Fountas and Pinnell** Reading levels are a system of reading levels developed to support in guided reading. Reading level is classified according to various parameters, such as word count, number of different words, number of high-frequency words, sentence length, sentence complexity, word repetitions, illustration support, etc. While young children display a wide distribution of reading skills, each level is tentatively associated with a school grade. In ELL we work with hometown teachers to assess, correlate and support students at the levels they need.

**WIDA** The WIDA Consortium is an American educational consortium of state departments of education. WIDA designs and implements proficiency standards and assessments for English-language learners. WIDA also provides professional development to educators and conducts research on instructional practices. AT GIS we use WIDA Model online to assess our ELL students from Grade 1 to the MYP.

**MAP** stands for Measure of Academic Progress and these adaptive assessments are completed online three times a year. The data generated and produced by NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) provides us with valuable information about a student’s current attainment and targets for growth. This assessment of learning is just one more tool to help ELL teachers plan and support students.

**Fountas and Pinnell website:** <http://www.fountasandpinnell.com>  
**WIDA website:** <https://www.wida.us>  
**NWEA MAP website:** <https://www.nwea.org>

