

ESOL provision and the New Zealand Curriculum - Comment by the Ministry of Education September 2006

ESOL provision and the New Zealand curriculum are topics of much interest to many people as part of the current discussion on the New Zealand Curriculum Draft. The importance of the role of English language learning and the requirement for it to be included in all areas of the curriculum is explicitly stated on page 24 of the draft for consultation, as requested by the sector and agreed in consultation with the Ministry. This is also consistent with recommendations in the meta-analysis of international research on best practice for diverse learners (Alton-Lee, 2003), which foregrounds the significance of ESOL provision in the curriculum by emphasising that every teacher shares the responsibility for explicitly teaching the language forms, structures and specialist and general use of the language of their subject area. Recognition of diverse students is also expressed as the Equity principle (page 9), in the Values, diversity, (page 10) and in the recognition that every learning area has a particular language (page 12). Moreover, the New Zealand Curriculum draft requires (page 26) that "each school will design and implement its own curriculum in ways that will engage and motivate its particular students". The choice of each school's content for ESOL support in mainstream and specialist ESOL classes will need to follow the direction of the Curriculum and adapt content for its own range of English language learners. This will allow it to be linked to their other learning, as best practice suggests is necessary.

The following information is intended to provide a background by summarising how the Ministry of Education has responded to sector needs since the publication of the 2003 research report *Improving English language outcomes for students receiving ESOL services in New Zealand schools*, with a particular emphasis on new immigrants (Franken and McComish). This report identified a number of issues for ESOL provision at the time, and informed the Ministry's basis for subsequent actions.

The Ministry of Education initiatives which have been introduced since 2003 to improve support to English language learners in both mainstream and ESOL specialist classes have been based on the principle that the fundamental purpose of ESOL provision in New Zealand schools is to facilitate access to learning in the curriculum areas, alongside supporting the acquisition of interpersonal communication skills. Firstly, the level and duration of ESOL funding to schools was substantially increased from 2004 onwards, with additional funding provided for intensive provision in the first two years for students from refugee backgrounds and for the first year for students from migrant backgrounds. This has enabled schools to provide additional staffing and resources.

There has also been significant work around supporting ESOL provision in specialist and mainstream classes, particularly in years 7-13. The primary school context tends to offer more opportunities across the curriculum for intensive provision for early stage English language learners. The emphasis on best first practice has been the focus of teacher professional development, and is reinforced through key publications such as *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1-4* and *Effective Literacy Practice in*

Years 5-8. These resources include specific reference to meeting the needs of English language learners. The development of further materials to support effective ESOL provision in the primary school is being explored, in order to offer more guidance to teachers in these year levels. Support for ESOL programming has been provided for teachers of English language learners in Years 7-13 with a range of resources. The English Language Intensive Programme (ELIP) is a comprehensive resource which provides guidance on programme planning and delivery by detailing language outcomes, genre-specific language teaching focus points and annotated text models, along with a set of teaching and assessment suggestions. This resource provides a basis for principled selection of content both for ESOL specialist programmes and for support in mainstream classes from beginner (Foundation Stage) to advanced (Stage 3), as many of the texts are on topics commonly encountered in the mainstream. The approach in ELIP to the analysis and construction of written and oral texts is consistent with language and literacy teaching in mainstream curriculum contexts. The ELIP resource is being used to assist mainstream teachers wanting to integrate the teaching of language and content, both by directly using content relevant to their own curriculum area (e.g. the Sustainable Energy or Antarctica texts) or as models for providing a language learning focus in other topics. The use of this resource has been supported by Ministry-funded professional development over the last three years and further support will continue in 2007.

Thirdly, the Selections series of materials and Teacher's Notes for developing reading skills at beginner and early stages of reading have given new focus to items from Parts 1 and 2 Journals, and the Ready to Read series. The Teachers' Notes have been written so that both ESOL specialist and mainstream teachers can use them as models for focusing on English language learning integrated with learning to read and reading to learn in a range of topic areas. Focus on English is a series of six units of work to support content area and language learning in Maths, Science and Social Studies for early-phase learners in Years 7-13. This resource was made available in 2004 to a limited number of schools, but has been redeveloped this year so that it can be much more widely accessed. It will be made available to all schools (state and integrated) with ESOL funded and international fee-paying students years 7-13 in September 2006 and support for its use will be a component of School Support Services work in 2007.

Model units of work to support language learning in the content areas (Microbes and Bamboo and Flax) have provided a catalyst for many Science and Social Studies teachers to collaborate with ESOL teachers on supporting ESOL in the mainstream. This approach has also been stimulated by the production of the video resource ESOL in the Mainstream, which has been used in a very large number of schools to draw attention to the needs of these learners in both primary and secondary curriculum contexts, and to make suggestions on how these needs can be met. Further audiovisual professional development materials to guide teachers of secondary maths and science in successfully integrating language and content area are currently in production.

ESOL online continues to provide an internationally respected and valuable source of additional English language learning content for ESOL specialist and mainstream classroom programmes at all levels. It also provides links to relevant and useful research and on-going online support for professional learning related to TESSOL. Teachers can access a set of principles on which to guide planning that combines a

focus on both content and language teaching. An exemplary science plan incorporating the principles accompanies this. It provides both ESOL specialist and mainstream teachers with a model for designing their own units of work which meet the needs of all learners. Units of work and exemplars to support the achievement of English language learners sitting NCEA through English Unit standards, English Achievement standards, and ESOL Unit standards have also been placed online. A new resource for teachers which is aimed at providing a model of scaffolded language teaching and learning for senior secondary students seeking to gain credits towards the Level 1 literacy requirements is being sent to schools in September. This resource is based on the *Danger* text from the *Choices* series.

Programme planning and assessment of English language learners has also been supported with the introduction of a draft English Language Learning Framework Draft (ELLF), in conjunction with a DVD of exemplars of oral language progression. The ELLF aims to help teachers to make judgements about starting points and progress of learners in ESOL specialist and mainstream classes, in both primary and secondary contexts, and to map and record their progress over time. The process of making these judgements will also be informed by the ESOL Progress Assessment Guidelines which are being used by ESOL specialist and mainstream teachers. The ELLF is also intended to assist teachers in selecting reading materials at an appropriate level for their students. It is currently in its second year of a nationwide trial.

Other increased support for ESOL since 2003 includes additional and continued TESSOL training scholarships (with applications made each year in October) and additional ESOL hours allocated to School Support Services in all regions. In addition, the Ministry has been developing other initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for specific groups of bilingual learners, eg Pasifika, through exploring the implications of cultural and linguistic diversity. The Ministry's strategic direction in supporting English language learners and their teachers continues to focus on effective provision of ESOL support in specialist and mainstream contexts Years 1 to Year 13, through quality teaching for diverse cultural and linguistic needs.