Bandscales for EAL/D learners

User guide

Acknowledgement to Country

The Department of Education acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands, seas, skies and waterways from across Queensland.

We pay our respect to the Elders, past and present, for they hold the memories, traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We recognise and thank the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people who contributed to the development of this document and celebrate their diverse strengths, perspectives and wisdom.

For more information, see our commitment statement.

Human rights commitment

We respect, protect and promote human rights in our decision-making. Through the implementation of the Bandscales for EAL/D learners, the Department of Education seeks to advance the cultural and linguistic rights of all students. We are committed to upholding the right to recognition and equality before the law, the right to education, and the right of all students to maintain and develop their cultural identity and home languages.

Contents

1. Introduction

Australia's cultural and linguistic diversity is reflected in the many students who learn English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) while accessing the Australian Curriculum. For some, Standard Australian English (SAE) is their third or fourth language. They bring varied backgrounds, experiences and levels of English proficiency. This group includes Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students with rich language repertoires who speak languages or dialects other than SAE as their main languages.

The *Bandscales for English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) learners* ('the Bandscales') is a set of descriptors of observable language learner behaviours that assist teachers to determine where their students are in their development of SAE proficiency. Teachers can use this information to plan and provide appropriate support for EAL/D learners, and to monitor their progress.

The Bandscales are a key part of a whole school approach to supporting EAL/D learners. This guide provides advice for classroom teachers as well as school leaders and other educators to help identify and/or monitor EAL/D development in Standard Australian English (SAE) proficiency.

In this guide, the terms **EAL/D student** and **EAL/D learner** are used deliberately and are not interchangeable:
- **EAL/D students** refer to all students who speak one or more languages and/or dialects other than SAE, whether or not they require language support. This includes students who:
  o already have SAE proficiency equal to their native-SAE-speaking peers and do not need additional support
  o are bilingual or multilingual with literacy in two or more languages, including SAE
  o speak creole languages such as Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole)
  o speak a home language that may be named or unnamed.
- **EAL/D learners** refer specifically to those EAL/D students who are still developing SAE proficiency and require targeted support to fully access and achieve in the Australian curriculum.

When the term '**EAL/D students**' is used in this guide, it refers to the broader group — all students with a language background other than SAE. When the term '**EAL/D learners**' is used, it refers only to those within that group who require EAL/D support. The Bandscales help schools make this distinction by identifying a student's current level of SAE proficiency, ensuring that support is provided to those who need it, while recognising and valuing the full linguistic repertoire and strengths that all EAL/D students bring to the classroom.

To build expert teaching teams and implement pedagogy for EAL/D learners in every classroom, schools can access additional advice, professional development and resources through their regions or by using the links provided in the **Additional Resources** section of this guide.

2. Who are EAL/D learners?

English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) learners are 'those whose first language is a language or dialect other than English and who require additional support to develop proficiency in SAE' (ACARA n.d.). These learners come from diverse language and cultural backgrounds, yet they face the common challenge of learning a new language, SAE, at the same time as learning curriculum content in and through a new language.

The 'A' in EAL/D

The term EAL/D is used in Queensland state schools and across Australian educational contexts, including the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, n.d.). This terminology replaces the earlier term English as a Second Language (ESL) and acknowledges the complex linguistic repertoires many students bring to school.

For many learners, English may be their third, fourth or subsequent language rather than their second. The term 'additional' more transparently reflects the multilingual capabilities of these students and values their existing language skills as resources for learning.

The 'D' in EAL/D

In addition to recognising students learning SAE as an additional language, the acronym EAL/D acknowledges learners who speak dialects of English that differ from SAE, including:
* Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students who speak language varieties which formed because of historical language contact between speakers of English and speakers of Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages, such as Aboriginal Englishes, creoles, or related varieties.

EAL/D student diversity

EAL/D students in Queensland state schools represent a rich diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They bring unique perspectives, strengths, and capabilities, along with distinctive ways of knowing, being, and doing that enrich classrooms. This diversity offers valuable opportunities for all students to build intercultural understanding, broaden their worldviews, and develop the global competencies needed to thrive in an interconnected world.

Figure 1 shows some of the backgrounds EAL/D students present in Queensland schools, and **Appendix 1** *The diversity of EAL/D student groups* provides more information about each group *(see also the K-12 framework, assessment and reporting framework and ACARA, n.d., in **Additional Resources**).*

Figure 1: Diversity of EAL/D students in Queensland state schools

EAL/D students may be
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Australian South Sea Islander
Māori
Pacific Islander background
Immigrants from countries where English is not the main language
Refugee or humanitarian backgrounds
Temporary residents on short term stays
Australian and returning from overseas, having lived for extended periods of time in countries where English is not a main language
Deaf or hard of hearing, or have Deaf parents and use Auslan as their first language
International students or children of international students

EAL/D students may differ based on three key dimensions:
- linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds
- context of learning
- visibility of EAL/D status.

Linguistic and cultural backgrounds

Linguistic and cultural backgrounds vary greatly among EAL/D students. **Figure 1** shows some of the backgrounds of EAL/D students present in Queensland schools. EAL/D students may also have diverse educational backgrounds. Some are highly literate in their first language with strong educational foundations, while others may have had limited or disrupted schooling. Some EAL/D students may have experiences of trauma, racism, or ableism that impacts their learning. They may also have intersecting experiences with disability and may be working across different language modes (signed versus spoken/written), requiring specific consideration in teaching approaches. These diverse backgrounds shape students' approaches to learning and influence how quickly they may develop proficiency in SAE. (including their cultural heritage, first language(s), level of literacy in their first language(s), and prior educational experiences)

Context of learning

EAL/D students' learning environments play a critical role in how they acquire Standard Australian English (SAE). These contexts vary widely and shape both the pace and pattern of students' language development, as well as the time it takes to develop proficiency in SAE.

In some contexts, students encounter SAE for the first time when they enter school. This is especially the case in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, which are common in many remote, discrete Aboriginal communities and Torres Strait Islander communities, where SAE is not part of daily community life and is usually only experienced in the classroom (Department of Education, Queensland, 2020; Angelo & Hudson, 2020).

Many of these students grow up speaking First Nations languages, new languages (such as Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole)/or Yarrie Lingo), or other creoles and community languages. For these learners, SAE is introduced alongside new curriculum content, with limited opportunities to practise outside school. Because of this, breaks in schooling such as holidays or absences can significantly slow SAE proficiency (Hudson, Angelo, & Creagh, 2023).

Other EAL/D learners may have had some or extensive exposure to SAE before or alongside schooling, through family, community, or media. This exposure supports more continuous SAE development and can lead to faster movement through early SAE language proficiency stages. The level of prior exposure ranging from none to extensive shapes both the pace and pattern of SAE language acquisition (Creagh, Kettle, Alford, & Comber, 2019). Students in EFL contexts generally require more time and sustained, explicit teaching to develop the academic language needed for success in school (Angelo, 2013).

Visibility of EAL/D status

Visibility of EAL/D status varies between students. Some EAL/D learners are readily identifiable through standard enrolment processes, particularly those who have newly arrived from non-English speaking countries and/or who speak a named language. Others, especially those born in Australia and those who speak a dialect other than Standard Australian English (SAE), may have SAE language learning needs that are less immediately apparent.

Acknowledging the connection between culture, language, and identity is essential when identifying EAL/D students. For some families, disclosing a child's language background can feel culturally unsafe or they may not realise they speak another language. Aboriginal families and Torres Strait Islander families may be reluctant to report home language use because of historical trauma, deficit framings, or fear of stigma. Migrant and refugee background families may also be hesitant if they believe home languages will be undervalued or if they do not recognise their language variety as sufficiently "different" from SAE. Building culturally safe enrolment and classroom processes is therefore critical to ensure families feel confident to share accurate information about their children's language resources.

It is also important to distinguish between the terms commonly used in schools and system data collections:
- **EAL/D (English as an Additional Language or Dialect)** – focuses on students' *language learning needs*. It identifies those who require additional support to develop SAE proficiency, including learners of other languages and dialects of English.
- **CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse)** – a broader demographic category that includes all students from diverse cultural and language backgrounds. Not all CALD students are EAL/D learners, as many may already be proficient in SAE.
- **LBOTE (Language Background Other Than English)** – a statistical label (used on NAPLAN tests) referring to students who have at least one parent or caregiver who speaks a language other than English at home. LBOTE status does not necessarily mean a student is an EAL/D learner. For example, a student may be raised bilingually and already proficient in SAE.
- **MLOTE (Main Language Other Than English)** – the category used in OneSchool and on enrolment forms to identify students.

These distinctions matter for visibility: a student may be CALD or LBOTE without requiring EAL/D support, while others who need support may not be immediately visible in enrolment data. When language differences are misunderstood, students may be incorrectly identified as having speech or language disorders, learning difficulties, or disabilities, leading to inappropriate interventions instead of the language support they require.

It is also worth noting that many Queensland students are simultaneous bilingual or multilingual learners. These students develop both their home language and SAE concurrently from birth. While they may not require EAL/D support, they can still benefit from language-aware teaching that acknowledges their linguistic repertoires and recognises that their developmental patterns may differ from those of monolingual SAE students.

Understanding this diversity is important at both school and classroom levels. At the school level, it supports culturally safe identification processes, accurate data collection, resource allocation, and family engagement. At the classroom level, it enables teachers to build on students' existing linguistic and cultural resources while providing the SAE teaching needed for academic success.

3. What are Bandscales?

The *Bandscales for EAL/D Learners* (Bandscales) are English language learning progressions used to identify, monitor, and assess the development of Standard Australian English (SAE) proficiency of EAL/D learners. They provide descriptions of predictable observable behaviours that reflect typical stages or milestones in second or additional language acquisition, enabling teachers to determine the language learning support needed for students to access the curriculum across all learning areas.

Each Bandscale level outlines specific teaching implications, guiding teachers to select pedagogies appropriate for EAL/D learners matched to a learners' current SAE language proficiency level. This enables teachers to provide targeted adjustments that help build SAE required to access the curriculum and demonstrate their learning. The Bandscales also recognise that SAE acquisition is continuous, and students may progress at different rates across the four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), creating a 'jagged profile' of acquisition.

Bandscales are **not**:
- **a curriculum assessment:** Bandscales are English language learning progressions used to identify, monitor and assess the development of SAE proficiency in EAL/D learners.
- **an assessment of literacy skills**: Bandscales assess language acquisition rather than literacy development. As with communication skills, an EAL/D learner may have strong literacy skills in their first language while still developing SAE proficiency, or conversely, may have good oral SAE proficiency while still developing literacy skills.
- **linked to any version of the Australian Curriculum**. Bandscales describe universal pathways of additional language (second language) acquisition through six levels of development, which remain constant regardless of curriculum changes because they reflect how people learn second or additional languages.
- **an assessment of communication skills**: Bandscales assess SAE language proficiency, not general communication skills. EAL/D learners have strong communication skills in their first language and will likely have developed strong translanguaging, codeswitching, and non-verbal communication skills to support

communication across their languages. Many may demonstrate effective social language in SAE while still developing the academic language proficiency needed for school success. This is often visible in student writing, where learners transfer spoken language patterns into written SAE as they move from oral fluency to academic control.

Evidence base

The Bandscales are built on the same research base as international models of English language learning progressions. These progressions describe clear, observable stages of how students develop English, grounded in second language acquisition research and validated through classroom evidence (Bailey & Heritage, 2014; Shepard, 2018). Like other well-designed progressions, the Bandscales show SAE language proficiency development as a continuum rather than fixed levels, helping teachers see what learners can already do and what they are ready to learn next (Alonzo & Elby, 2019; Michell, 2021).

The Bandscales are grounded in foundational research in second language acquisition (Krashen, 1981). They also build on Cummins' influential research, which has shaped our understanding of how long EAL/D learners take to acquire English. Cummins distinguishes between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), showing that while conversational English can typically be acquired within two to three years, academic English may take five to seven years or longer, particularly for students with limited or interrupted prior schooling (Cummins, 1979; 2008). This framework has been validated internationally, with research in the United States (Thomas & Collier, 2002), the United Kingdom (Strand & Lindorff, 2021), and Australia (AERO, 2025; Creagh et al., 2019) confirming the extended timelines required for academic language development.

The Bandscales also draw on research into second dialect acquisition (Siegel, 2010), recognising the distinctive pathways of learners acquiring Standard Australian English (SAE) as an additional dialect, where their first languages may share some features with SAE while differing in significant way.

Contemporary studies further demonstrate the Bandscales' validity and reliability, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners (see Hudson et al., 2023 for summary). Research also provides evidence that teacher judgments using the Bandscales align with external standardised assessment data like NAPLAN (Creagh, 2014) and that teachers find the Bandscales a useful tool to inform differentiated pedagogy within the classroom context (Hudson & Angelo, 2020).

History of Bandscales

The Bandscales have evolved through several iterations over several decades to best meet the needs of Queensland educators working with EAL/D students.

The Bandscales in their current form have built on earlier documents including the *National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA) ESL Bandscales* (1994), the *NLLIA ESL Bandscales Version 2* (2007), Education Queensland's *Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners* (2002) and *Bandscales for English as a Second Language/Dialect (ESL/D) Learners (2008, 2013)*, and the Queensland Department of Education's *Bandscales State Schools (Queensland)* (2012, 2020).

It is important to note that the Bandscales were explicitly developed with consideration of second dialect acquisition and the complex linguistic contexts of Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students in Queensland (see Turnbull, 2000; 2002; Turnbull & Hudson, 2000). Because of this, the Bandscales include descriptors and samples of common features inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander second dialect learners' emerging SAE and a larger number of levels than comparable tools to allow for the tracking of more modest or subtle SAE growth that can be typical of second dialect learner.

Relationship to curriculum and other monitoring tools

The Australian Curriculum
The Australian Curriculum acknowledges the importance of recognising and responding to the learning needs of EAL/D students (ACARA, n.d.).

Bandscales do not directly measure curriculum achievement or align with specific curriculum content, as they are designed to map SAE language acquisition and progression. They provide critical insights that inform curriculum planning and differentiation by helping teachers understand a student's current level of SAE language proficiency and then in turn to determine appropriate language supports as well as adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment.

ACARA Learning Progressions: Foundation to Year 10
ACARA has developed the EAL/D Learning Progressions (ACARA, 2015) with four phases (Beginning, Emerging, Developing, Consolidating) that, like Bandscales, are used to track and monitor EAL/D students' SAE language proficiency. Other jurisdictions around Australia also have their own EAL/D language proficiency monitoring tools. Queensland state schools use Bandscales because they:
- provide six proficiency levels, allowing more nuanced tracking of language development
- validate extensive research for use with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners
- offer more detailed descriptors to support focused and intensive teaching
- integrate with Queensland's education data systems.

The P–10 Literacy continuum

EAL/D students are simultaneously developing SAE language proficiency (measured by the Bandscales) and literacy (reflected in the P–10 Literacy Continuum).

Language proficiency and literacy are related but distinct concepts. Language proficiency refers to the ability to understand and use a language for communication purposes across all modes (listening, speaking, reading/viewing, and writing). Literacy refers specifically to the ability to read, write, and engage with written texts. A student may have strong oral language skills without being literate or may be highly literate in one language while still developing basic oral proficiency in another.

For EAL/D students, literacy development in English is intrinsically linked to their developing SAE proficiency. This means progress on the literacy continuum will often reflect progress in SAE language learning. For example:
- A student may demonstrate advanced literacy skills in their first language but appear to have "low" literacy in SAE, not because they lack literacy concepts or skills, but because they are still learning the language of schooling.
- Conversely, a student may develop strong decoding skills in SAE but continue to struggle with comprehension because they are still developing SAE vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

The Bandscales are **not intended to directly assess literacy development.** However, they provide critical information that helps teachers reframe how they interpret student performance. By distinguishing between language needs and literacy needs, Bandscales data supports teachers to:
- set literacy goals that are realistic for students' current SAE proficiency,
- identify the language supports students require to access literacy tasks, and
- design teaching that develops both SAE and literacy in tandem.

When reviewing student progress, avoid interpreting literacy challenges as a "literacy deficit" if the underlying issue is limited SAE proficiency. Instead, use Bandscales to identify the language knowledge needed for literacy success, and plan explicit teaching that builds both language and literacy together.

Format

Phases

The Bandscales are presented for two phases of learning:
- **Early phase**: Prep to Year 3
- **Middle phase**: Year 4 to Year 10

EAL/D learners arrive at Queensland schools with very different levels of SAE proficiency. Bandscales levels do not align with year levels because a learner's language development depends on prior exposure and schooling.

> *Example: A 14-year-old in Year 9 may be a new arrival with no prior English. Their Bandscales level may be at Level 1 or 2 in the middle phase, requiring intensive EAL/D support to access the curriculum alongside peers.*

Macro Skills

The Bandscales are further divided up into four macro skills for each phase. There are two receptive skills: listening and reading/viewing, and two productive skills: speaking and writing. Each category includes a literacy skill: reading/viewing and writing, and an oracy skill: listening and speaking. Each of the four macro skills are assessed independently.

Levels

There are six Bandscales levels included in each Bandscale. Each Bandscales level contains **descriptors of observable language behaviours**. Teachers use these to identify a student's proficiency in each of the four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading/viewing, writing) and to plan targeted support.

Pre-levels

Some Bandscales levels include **pre-levels** (generally at Levels 1, 2, or 3). These capture the significant progress made by learners who are developing SAE from very limited starting points. Pre-levels are particularly relevant for students who:
- come from low print literacy backgrounds,
- have had little or no prior education in their first language, or
- are exposed to SAE only in the classroom (e.g. many students in EFL contexts such as remote schools).

In the middle phase Bandscales, reading/viewing and writing descriptors also include Pre-Level 1 for learners with **limited schooling** backgrounds, making progress more visible for this group.

Progress patterns

Learners with stronger educational foundations in their first language may progress more rapidly through early levels (e.g. to Level 4 with targeted support). However:

- Moving from Level 4 to 5, and Level 5 to 6, usually takes longer.
- Ongoing EAL/D support remains essential for learners to continue developing SAE proficiency.
- Progress against different macro skills may be uneven, e.g. a student may be at a higher Bandscale level in speaking than in reading.

Ongoing support

All EAL/D learners require **sustained support at key junctures**, including:

- transition from primary to secondary schooling,
- increasing complexity of academic tasks, and
- consolidation of subject knowledge through SAE.

As academic language (CALP) becomes more demanding in secondary years, learners may progress more slowly through Bandscales levels while strengthening their curriculum knowledge.

Learners who speak non-Standard English dialects

Students who speak a dialect of English or other home varieties that share features with SAE (e.g. Aboriginal English, Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole) present unique patterns:

- **Speaking**: They may appear at higher Bandscales levels for speaking. For this reason, lower speaking levels contain fewer descriptors for this group.
- **Reading/viewing and Writing**: Differences between their spoken variety and written SAE often mean lower Bandscales levels contain many descriptors for these modes.
- **Listening**: They may seem to have strong listening skills, but this should not be assumed. Teachers must assess listening based on each student's exposure to SAE and individual abilities (e.g. hearing).

4. Who can use the Bandscales?

Bandscales are designed to be used by all educators working with EAL/D learners. With the increasing linguistic diversity in Queensland classrooms, data shows that most teachers will have at least one EAL/D learner in their classes, and some schools may have predominantly or entirely EAL/D student populations.

It is therefore very important that every teacher can confidently and competently identify, support and monitor the SAE language development of EAL/D students. All classroom teachers can use Bandscales to:
- observe and document language behaviours across the four macro-skills
- determine students' current SAE proficiency levels
- monitor progress in language development over time
- plan for appropriate scaffolding and differentiation in teaching and assessment
- inform focused and intensive language teaching.

As part of supporting EAL/D learners, schools should consider how Bandscales data can inform:
- curriculum planning and implementation
- teaching and learning practices
- resource allocation
- professional learning priorities.

Schools with EAL/D specialists may leverage their expertise to build capability across teaching teams and provide targeted professional learning. Regional EAL/D advisors can also support schools in implementing Bandscales effectively. Other resources for identifying, assessing, and supporting EAL/D learners are provided in **Additional Resources**.

5. Why use Bandscales

The *Bandscales* data helps construct a comprehensive profile of EAL/D students. Teachers can then build on EAL/D students' strengths and identify language learning needs, ensuring they develop proficiency in SAE, and are able to learn – and demonstrate their achievement in – the Australian Curriculum.

For teachers

Bandscales data assists **teachers** to**:**
- determine SAE language proficiency levels of EAL/D students
- understand the language learning needs of EAL/D students
- plan for intentional and scaffolded teaching of curriculum content based on students' SAE language proficiency levels
- plan for focused and intensive SAE language instruction
- monitor students' progress in SAE proficiency to inform academic reporting decisions and next steps in teaching.

For schools

Bandscales data assists **schools** to:
- identify EAL/D learners and build greater language awareness among students, staff, and the school community
- develop appropriate supports for EAL/D learners
- monitor individual and cohort EAL/D learner progress
- measure the effectiveness of agreed practices on language learning and academic achievement
- engage in collaborative inquiry to measure school performance and identify opportunities across all domains of the school improvement hierarchy to enhance learning and achievement for EAL/D learners
- use Bandscales data to guide school decision-making, including resource allocation for language programs, student support, and staffing. While Bandscales provide valuable evidence for planning and monitoring, note that they only attract funding for Education Queensland International (EQI) non-marketed students. For

detailed guidance on funding and resourcing processes, refer to the OneSchool Help page or other OnePortal resources.

For policy makers

Bandscales data recorded in OneSchool assists **policy makers** to:
- build a more accurate and detailed profile of the EAL/D student cohort in Queensland state schools
- ensure EAL/D students have equity of access and equity of outcomes in state schools, in line with the department's strategy
- identify regional and state-wide trends to inform targeted system responses
- shape strategic priorities, plans and policies at a regional and state level

Using Bandscales to inform tailored supports for EAL/D learners

Differentiated teaching enables schools to support EAL/D learners to access, participate in, and progress through the curriculum while developing proficiency in Standard Australian English (SAE). Bandscales data helps teachers identify students' language development needs and plan appropriate learning opportunities and supports.

As shown in **Figure 2**, schools may provide increasingly personalised responses, from differentiated to focused or intensive teaching, depending on students' SAE language learning pathways. EAL/D learners may continue to require focused and intensive teaching of SAE, particularly as academic language becomes more complex and learning tasks more cognitively demanding.

This model is not a fixed sequence; supports are flexible and can be adapted according to students' SAE language proficiency, classroom context, and evolving needs. Bandscales give teachers a structured framework for recognising and responding to diverse language profiles, enabling informed decisions about when and how to provide scaffolding that aligns with students' progression in SAE.

Figure 2: Targeted and intensive support for EAL/D learners

Intensive teaching

All EAL/D learners require periods of intensive teaching at different times in their learning journey. This is particularly crucial for EAL/D learners working within **Bandscale levels Pre-Level 1 to 3**. Intensive support may include:

- provision of intensive Standard Australian English (SAE) language classes/centres delivered by an EAL/D teacher.
- individual or small-group direct and explicit SAE language teaching, targeted to the learner's immediate language needs.

Focused teaching

All EAL/D learners require focused teaching, however this is essential for learners at Bandscale levels Pre-Level 1 to 5. Focused support may include:

- whole class teaching (with built-in scaffolds); and/or
- small-group with explicit Standard Australian English (SAE) language teaching tailored to their language learning needs.

Differentiated teaching

All EAL/D learners require differentiated teaching that explicitly addresses their language learning needs alongside the curriculum

6. When to use Bandscales?

Bandscales should be used at key points in an EAL/D student's learning journey to identify SAE language learning needs, inform teaching approaches, and monitor progress. Some examples of occasions for using Bandscales include:

Frequency of use

Bandscales data should be collected **every six months** to monitor progress, inform classroom planning, scaffold support and report to parents. Teachers may wish to schedule these regular assessments at strategic intervals, including:

- upon initial identification of a student as EAL/D (either through enrolment processes or classroom observation)
- after a settling-in period for newly enrolled EAL/D students
- at key transition points such as moving between year levels, changing schools, or transitioning from primary to secondary education
- when planning new units of work to inform appropriate language scaffolding and differentiation
- when planning or reviewing support provisions in OneSchool to evaluate the effectiveness of tailored supports.
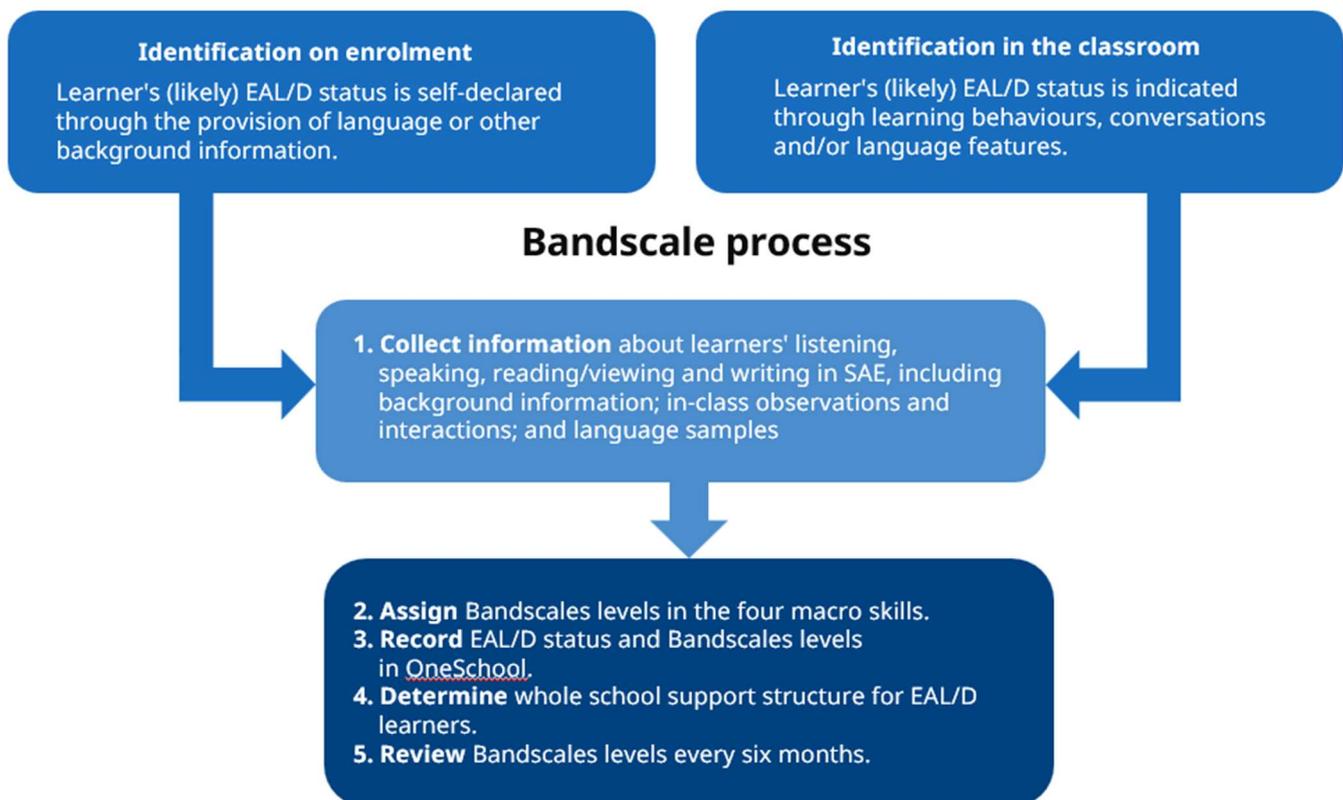
Note: Whilst an EAL/D student who is new to SAE (e.g. Bandscales 1) may move quite quickly through the lower levels to level 3, the Bandscales levels represent broad phases in learners' SAE proficiency development and usually progress through each level can take a significant amount of time. Therefore, use of Bandscales more frequently than six months is not generally recommended.

Using Bandscales to support EAL/D identification

A consistent school-wide processes for using Bandscales ensures for identification and support of each EAL/D student, including the collection of background language information. As shown in **Figure 3**, there are two main pathways for identifying EAL/D students: identification **on enrolment** and identification **in the classroom**.

For more detailed advice on identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D students, see the Identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D students resource listed in **Additional Resources**.

Figure 3: Identifying EAL/D students and Bandscale process

Identification on enrolment
Learner's (likely) EAL/D status is self-declared through the provision of language or other background information.

Identification in the classroom
Learner's (likely) EAL/D status is indicated through learning behaviours, conversations and/or language features.

Bandscale process

1. **Collect information** about learners' listening, speaking, reading/viewing and writing in SAE, including background information; in-class observations and interactions; and language samples

2. **Assign** Bandscales levels in the four macro skills.
3. **Record** EAL/D status and Bandscales levels in OneSchool.
4. **Determine** whole school support structure for EAL/D learners.
5. **Review** Bandscales levels every six months.

Identification on enrolment

Some EAL/D students may be identified through enrolment processes because of language information provided on their enrolment form or at their enrolment interview.

Bandscales should be used to determine these students' SAE language proficiency as soon as possible after enrolment, recognising that students may require a settling-in period to develop confidence in this new setting, and that a variety of language samples need to be collected from across a range of contexts.

Box 1: Gathering language information during enrolments

During enrolment, teachers can gather information on the:
- cultural background or heritage of the learner and parent/s or caregiver/s (if they are available, interpreters may be required to help in collecting background information from parents/carers.)
- main language/s or dialect/s other than English (MLOTE) spoken in the home or family circle
- language background other than English (LBOTE)
- any previous EAL/D or Bandscales reports, including the learner's previous SAE learning and exposure to SAE/tuition
- information about prior education in the learner's first language/dialect or other language/s; how many years they were educated in those languages or dialects; whether the education was provided in refugee settings; and school reports or achievements (if applicable)
- country, or place of birth in Australia, and/or countries of residence
- date of arrival, if not born in Australia a copy of the learner's passport, visa and/or travel documents.

Some families may be hesitant to identify languages other than SAE spoken at home during enrolment. This is particularly common among Aboriginal families and Torres Strait Islander families, who may have experienced historical trauma related to language use or fear judgment about their children's language background or may not recognise their home language variety as "different enough" to mention. Other families from migrant or refugee backgrounds may have similar concerns.
Schools can foster culturally safe enrolment practices by:

- involving staff from the same cultural background (such as Indigenous Education Workers, Community Education Counsellors, teacher aides) in enrolment conversations
- explaining clearly how language information will be used to support the student's learning, not to label or frame them as deficit
- reassuring families that their language background is valued as an asset for learning
- using inclusive language that validates all language varieties (e.g. "What languages or ways of talking are used in your home?")
- providing interpreters where needed to ensure families can fully participate in enrolment discussions
- sharing resources like *Recognising the languages in your family and community* to help families understand why this information matters (see **Additional Resources**).

These practices can help build trust and ensure more accurate identification of EAL/D students during enrolment. However, even with these practices in place, some EAL/D students may still only be identified through classroom observation after enrolment.

Identification in the classroom

Some students, including Australian born EAL/D students, may not readily identify as EAL/D learners at enrolment and their possible EAL/D background may only become apparent through observation of their classroom learning behaviours and language use.

Once a classroom teacher suspects that a student may be an EAL/D learner, they should commence collecting information and making classroom observations that might be used to determine if a student is an EAL/D learner.

Box 2: Gathering language information in the classroom

After enrolment, teachers can:
- gather additional information about learner's language background through on-going conversations with the student, family and other school staff
- consult with parents, caregivers, and where appropriate, community members to understand the student's language exposure and use at home and in the community
- consider cultural factors that may influence language use, including cultural communication norms and practices
- make notes and observations about the learner's language behaviours (e.g. responses to instructions, contributions to class discussions)
- collect work samples and assessments.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but these observations and information may alert teachers to a student possibly having an EAL/D background. The observation of all or only a few of these indicators should prompt a deeper investigation of the student's language background.

EAL/D learner language use may differ from SAE in some or all the following areas:
- spoken language sounds
- vocabulary and word meanings e.g. words found in SAE but used differently (e.g. 'swim' for 'bath')
- grammar e.g. word endings (-ing, -s), noun and verb groups, subject-verb agreement, verb tense, use of prepositions (e.g. 'ontop' for 'on')
- sentence structures e.g. complete/incomplete sentences, simple/compound/complex sentences, word order that doesn't follow SAE convention (e.g. 'I go ouse' for 'I'm going home').

Also note if learners:
- seem aware of language differences and appear to switch between SAE and non-SAE ways of speaking (e.g. the language they use when speaking to their friends or teacher appears different)
- speak very little or make no response
- seem (overly) reliant on formulaic responses
- tend to be hesitant when using SAE.

The Bandscales assist in confirming that a student has a language background other than SAE and in determining the SAE language proficiency of students considered to be EAL/D learners.

Some families may prefer not to have their child formally identified as EAL/D due to concerns about labelling, historical trauma, or because they do not recognise their language variety as "different enough" to warrant formal identification. In these situations, while the classroom observation process may not lead to an EAL/D designation in OneSchool, students can still receive appropriate SAE language support based on their demonstrated needs as evidenced through the assigned Bandscale.

7. How to use Bandscales?

To work effectively with the Bandscales, teachers should become familiar with the descriptors across the four macro skills: listening, speaking, reading/viewing, and writing. The process involves three key steps: collecting evidence, analysing language behaviours, and assigning appropriate levels.

Collecting evidence

Determining a student's Bandscale level begins with a collection of work produced as part of curriculum instruction, assessment and teacher observations. Teachers may have already begun collecting these as part of the identification process (**Section 4**). This collated evidence is then matched to the Bandscales descriptors.

Many EAL/D learners demonstrate greater SAE fluency in social contexts than in curriculum learning contexts where the subject matter is often unfamiliar; new knowledge and skills are being taught; and more academic or abstract language is required. Therefore, it's important that language samples and observations are collected within learning environments and relate to curriculum content across the learning areas. **Box 3** provides more advice on collecting evidence.

Box 3: Collecting evidence

Teachers should:
- gather a range of formal and informal samples of student language in relation to classroom work (e.g. transcripts of student classroom talk, anecdotal notes on their responses to instructions and classroom talk, diagnostic testing data, drafts and final copies of written tasks)
- observe and make notes about the nature and extent of student's participation in class interactions
- conduct focused discussions about curriculum content and note apparent understanding and use of subject- or topic-specific language
- Look for evidence of code-switching or translanguaging[1] between home and school languages
- note variations in SAE proficiency across different learning areas. (Variations may be due to different language demands, teaching approaches, or prior knowledge and may indicate areas for further investigation)
- collect samples over time to ensure an accurate representation of ability
- consult with families to gather information about the student's language use in home and community contexts, which may reveal important strengths not visible in the classroom setting where available, collaborate with bilingual staff such as Indigenous Education Workers, Community Education Counsellors, or teacher aides who can provide insights about a student's language use in different contexts and languages

Analyse the observable language behaviours

Using the gathered evidence, teachers should analyse their EAL/D learners' use of the four macro skills to 'tune in' to the student's language behaviours[1] in SAE. The questions and tips in **Boxes 4-8**, alongside the Bandscales descriptors, can assist teachers to more accurately determine which Bandscales level best describes a student's language proficiency in each of the macro skills.

Box 4: Tips for conducting focused discussions and questioning

Speaking and listening Bandscales are supported with focused discussions and careful questioning. When conducting a focused discussion or interview, teachers should:
- establish a quiet, non-threatening environment to allow students to demonstrate their SAE language proficiency
- use topics from the learning environment of the learner, which reflect current or previous experiences and learning
- refer to age-appropriate materials
- be culturally inclusive, recognising that intonation, stress, pause, facial expression and gesture (non-verbal) may differ across languages and cultures.

When questioning learners to elicit a spoken language sample, use open-ended questions that begin with who, what, when, where, how and why.

Questions need to be carefully planned to allow students to demonstrate to the level of language complexity they can clearly communicate ideas.

Questions should:
- be short and direct
- be asked one at a time
- be followed by sufficient 'think time' for students to process and respond
- be rephrased if necessary.
- progress from general to specific to allow students to demonstrate the language they have learned and can use confidently, and at what point their level of SAE language frustrates their attempts to express more complex ideas
- cover one concept with increasing levels of complexity, rather than covering a large amount of 'surface' content about a topic.

Interviewing in this manner will provide useful information to help determine a student's speaking and listening Bandscales levels and monitor their language learning and development.

Box 5: Analyse language behaviours – listening

Teachers should consider the student's listening behaviours and whether they demonstrate these listening behaviours (sometimes, usually or always).

- What is the learner's general ability to understand (to process, comprehend and synthesise) spoken language when:
    - following teacher instructions?
    - participating in one-on-one conversations on classroom topics?
    - answering questions in whole class contexts?
    - exchanging ideas in small groups?
    - synthesising spoken information for use in speaking and writing?
- In a listening context can the learner:
    - follow different kinds of conversations, questions or discussions equally easily?
    - answer questions or contribute information fully or partially or are they 'off topic'?
    - explain what the lesson is about and what is important?
- Does the learner require extra support such as:
    - working with highly familiar content or pre-taught language and content?
    - having a conversation partner who understands the student is an EAL/D learner?
    - having the teacher rephrase or simplify instructions/statements?
    - extra 'think time' to process and/or respond?
- Does the learner respond with rehearsed or taught language or self-formulated responses?
- Does the learner need support to enhance the meaning of spoken language (prompts, concrete experiences/materials, visual support)?
- To what extent can the learner:
    - use information from spoken language repeat short amounts of spoken language (instructions for a class activity)?
    - recall and retell spoken information (experiment results, sequence of a story)?
    - express ideas in different words (concepts as heard in classroom discussions)?
    - summarise main points of a spoken story (plot elements, character description)?
    - understand important points of a spoken exchange (argument, discussion)?

Box 6: Analyse language behaviours - speaking

Teachers should consider whether the learner demonstrates any of the following speaking behaviours (sometimes, usually or always).

- Does the learner offer to speak in classroom activities? Would the learner initiate or sustain a conversation about classroom content?
- Does the learner often respond: non-verbally; minimally; or extensively on known or taught subject matter?
- Does the learner produce examples of language: close to what you would say; or approximate to SAE, but with omitted endings or non-standard verb endings.
- If the learner produces a non-standard feature, can the learner self-correct?
- Does the learner rely on gestures, single words or familiarised language?
- In response to instructions or a question, does the learner: demonstrate understanding; ask for repetition or explanation; communicate any lack of understanding?
- How much support do you need to provide in: re-phrasing or re-stating questions; using picture cues; asking less complex questions; encouraging peers to explain things to them?
- How fluent is the learner's talk? Consider: hesitation; repetition; use of fillers; intonation, pace of delivery; reliance on a conversation partner.

Box 7: Analyse language behaviours – reading/viewing

Teachers should consider whether the learner requires support or demonstrates any of the following reading/viewing behaviours (sometimes, usually or always):

- Can the learner: decode text (read out loud); recognise and locate letters, words, phrases or information?
- To make meaning of print does the learner need: gestures; illustrations; headings or explanations; familiar topics?
- Can the learner state orally what is written?
- How accurately and extensively does the learner comprehend age-appropriate texts?
- What kind of support, if any, does the learner need to: understand the information comprehension questions (what, where, how, when, why, who, what if) are seeking; answer questions successfully; provide details or justify?
- Does the learner need intensive, one-to-one support to understand the expectations of written instructions and assessment tasks?

Box 8: Analyse language behaviours - writing

Teachers should consider whether the learner demonstrates any of the following writing behaviours (sometimes, usually or always).
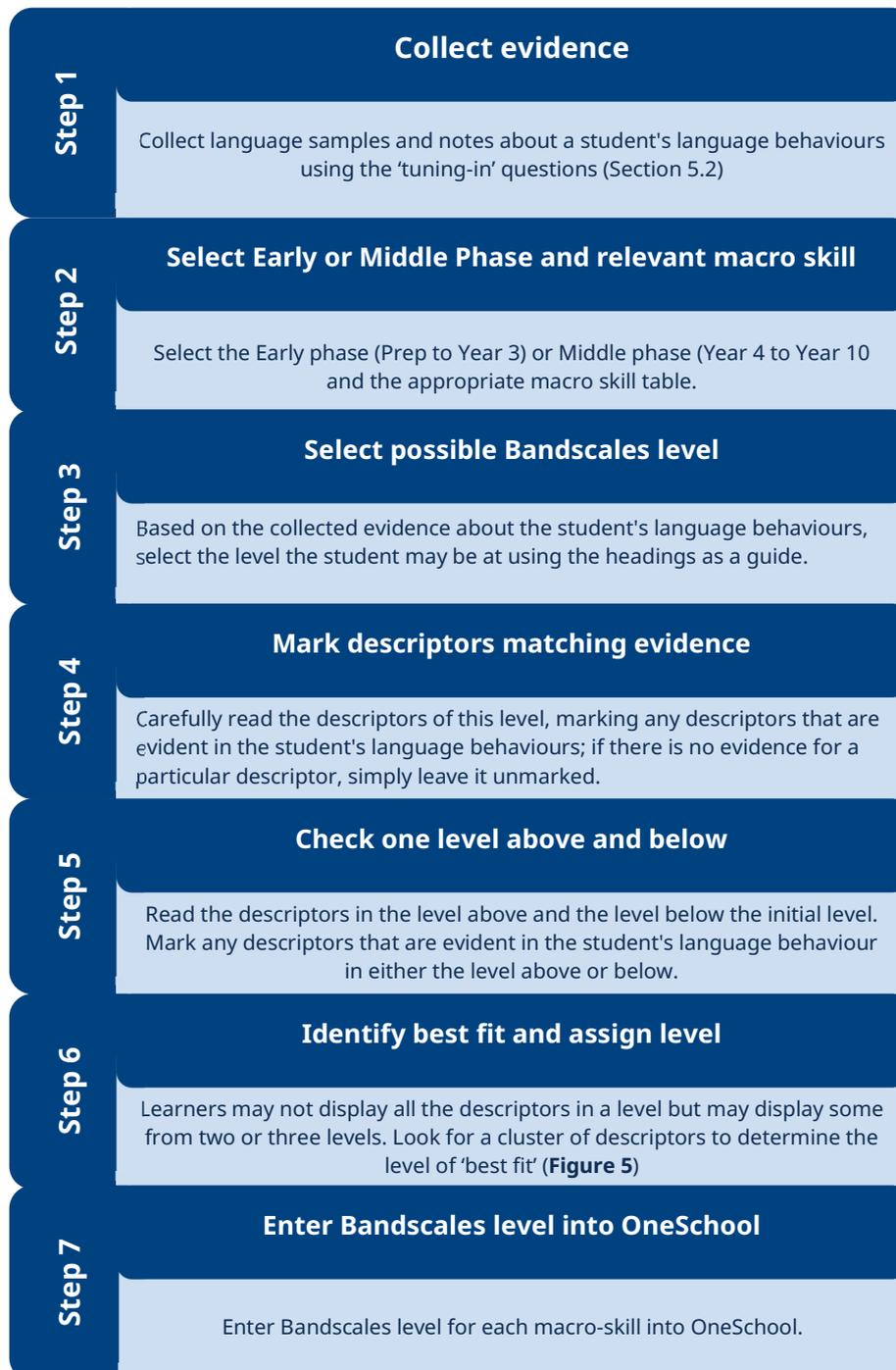
- Is the learner reproducing formulaic language and repeated sentence patterns, or is the learner making their own attempts at SAE?
- Is there evidence of language features such as the omission of word endings or prepositions, inconsistent subject-verb agreement or the use of non-standard words or word forms?
- Can the learner demonstrate flexible language uses such as: changing language patterns to suit different text types; using the appropriate language features of different text types; expressing an idea in more than one way; re-arranging a sentence to improve syntax or for a particular effect; making appropriate language choices for the intended audience and purpose?
- Can the learner produce texts: of age-appropriate length and complexity; in a range of text types; that include complex sentences (where appropriate), as well as simple sentences and/or compound sentences?
- Is the meaning of the learner's writing clear?

Note: Use the learner's own drafts or work samples to determine their Bandscales level for writing. If work has been corrected or edited by the teacher, the learner's original work must still be visible.

Assign a Bandscales level

EAL/D learners' levels of proficiency in each of the four macro skills of listening, speaking, reading/viewing and writing are determined by matching students' language behaviours to the descriptors on the relevant Bandscales table. Teachers examine one macro skill at a time using the collected evidence and observations about each student's language use. To assign a Bandscales level in a particular macro skill teachers use the following steps (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4: Assigning a Bandscales level

Step 1

Collect evidence

Collect language samples and notes about a student's language behaviours using the 'tuning-in' questions (Section 5.2)

Step 2

Select Early or Middle Phase and relevant macro skill

Select the Early phase (Prep to Year 3) or Middle phase (Year 4 to Year 10 and the appropriate macro skill table.

Step 3

Select possible Bandscales level

Based on the collected evidence about the student's language behaviours, select the level the student may be at using the headings as a guide.

Step 4

Mark descriptors matching evidence

Carefully read the descriptors of this level, marking any descriptors that are evident in the student's language behaviours; if there is no evidence for a particular descriptor, simply leave it unmarked.

Step 5

Check one level above and below

Read the descriptors in the level above and the level below the initial level. Mark any descriptors that are evident in the student's language behaviour in either the level above or below.

Step 6

Identify best fit and assign level

Learners may not display all the descriptors in a level but may display some from two or three levels. Look for a cluster of descriptors to determine the level of 'best fit' (**Figure 5**)

Step 7

Enter Bandscales level into OneSchool

Enter Bandscales level for each macro-skill into OneSchool.

In **Figure 5**, the evidence of a student's SAE language behaviours collected by the teacher aligns with a cluster of descriptors in Level 3. The student would be recorded in OneSchool as Level 3 for Speaking. Level 4 descriptors that are not circled (i.e. no evidence – yet) indicate language behaviours the teacher may need to look for next.

Figure 5: Using a cluster of descriptors to identify 'best fit' to assign a Bandscales level

Early phase — Speaking

New to Standard Australian English (SAE)		Beginning to use familiar SAE		Beginning to participate in SAE	Developing use of SAE	Consolidating use of SAE	Becoming competent in SAE
Pre-level 1: student uses home language exclusively	**Level 1:** student uses isolated SAE words	**Pre-level 2:** student starting to use rehearsed SAE phrases	**Level 2:** student tries short utterances on their own	**Level 3:** student participates in some classroom talk	**Level 4:** student undertakes some learning through SAE	**Level 5:** student expands their range of SAE	**Level 6:** student comprehends extended talk in SAE
may use home language– spoken and 'body language' – even with SAE speakers (particularly creole speakers)	uses single SAE words occasionally (e.g. when naming or labelling objects)	uses some routine and rehearsed social SAE (e.g. familiar courtesies such as 'good morning Miss')	uses routine and rehearsed social SAE (e.g. everyday polite requests such as 'can I get a drink, please?')	joins in routine exchanges (e.g. greeting, simple routine classroom responses) without great difficulty	communicates in a growing range of familiar social and learning situations with some support from listener and context	sustains participation in small group discussions on familiar learnt topics	uses SAE with fluency in all social and learning activities
may talk spontaneously in home language (e.g. during classroom activities)	uses words that express immediate needs	is developing a larger set of single words	begins combining words into a few (i.e. not rehearsed) 2 to 3-word utterances linked by sequence (i.e. not connectives) but needs supportive listener and environment	needs to rely heavily on the context and on the conversation partner for support (e.g. allowing time for the learner to process what they want to say, giving supportive gestures and facial expressions, re-phrasing questions, using objects or pictures, re-telling a story)	attempts to express complex thoughts and feelings in English but relies on attentive conversation partner to follow meaning	contributes own ideas and opinions in SAE in one-on-one conversation and with encouragement within supportive classroom context	can participate in an interaction expressing own ideas and opinions with little help from teachers or peers though with some difficulties with precision of meaning
may answer SAE questions in home language	uses rehearsed, memorised or formulaic taught utterances (e.g. repeating memorised phrases or sentences from shared reading books, utilising routine memorised sentences from well-rehearsed classroom topics)	uses rehearsed, memorised or formulaic taught utterances	makes slight deviations in routine formulaic SAE which indicate that SAE is not first language	participates in and initiates face-to-face interaction on familiar classroom topics with familiar people in a classroom situation but relies on support from listener and context	prefers to express themselves without interruption or corrections	is fluent in familiar areas, though may still approximate SAE forms	expresses more complex ideas on both familiar and new topics as long as the content is well grounded.
needs an attentive listener to predict meaning (e.g. from gestures and context)	needs an attentive listener to predict meaning (e.g. from gestures and context)	produces accurate memorised SAE which may misleadingly suggest a higher level	is developing confidence to take risks with their beginning SAE at school	constructs own language beyond formulae and 2 to 3-word utterances	sustains a conversation with an attentive adult on a familiar topic (e.g. describing classroom activities, re-telling stories, describing past and present events) but may not provide explicit details	participates in regular classroom activities on familiar topics, but does not have the 'depth' of language needed to relate more complex ideas needed in learning through SAE.	
may expect all listeners to understand home language (i.e. even SAE speakers)	may 'echo' SAE words and phrases	makes meaning only when listener has prior understanding of the context	may use some SAE to exert influence on a situation (e.g. directing others, says 'sit on the mat' as part of morning routine)	gives short responses to teacher's guiding questions about classroom activities (e.g. teacher asks 'what have you got there?')	has confidence to give a short morning talk but has fragmented language when attempting longer discourses		
requires an interpreter for important communication within school or between school and family (up to level 5).	may talk spontaneously in home language (e.g. during classroom activities)	may talk spontaneously in home language (e.g. during classroom activities).	joins in repetitive language of stories, poems and songs	may need or prefer a long wait time before responding in SAE	explores more complex ideas in home language with home language-speaking peers and adults		
	may spend a period (few days to a few months) acquiring language but is not yet ready to speak ('silent period'). This is a normal but not necessary phase of language learning		may repeat questions or statements of others.	uses home language for social interaction.	can give short answers to who, what, where, when, why and how single-clause questions about contextualised classroom activities		
	may experience a social and emotional 'orientation phase' (overwhelmed with new learning situation, impact of trauma, need to develop trust in classroom relationships with teachers and peers), which can be prolonged.		talks spontaneously in home language (e.g. during classroom activities) and will continue to do so		requires time to process thoughts and formulate SAE utterances		
			will rely on attentive speaker (gestures, context, objects, pictures) to help communication.		makes approximations to SAE forms and so speaking and writing will contain errors (a sign of language development) but meaning is generally unimpeded.		

Each Bandscales level includes several language descriptors, which means a student may develop their SAE language proficiency without moving to the next level. Monitoring progress every six months enables the teacher to report on (and celebrate) a student's success in learning SAE even though their Bandscales levels and reported grades may be unchanged.

It is common for language learners to develop different macro skills at different rates. For example, they may be more proficient – and therefore at a higher Bandscales level – in speaking SAE than they are in writing. A 'jagged' profile is normal. The focus needs to be on what the student needs to learn next in each macro skill and how best to support their language learning.

Enter data in OneSchool

In Queensland state schools, OneSchool is used to store and maintain student data including a 'flag' to denote EAL/D background and Developmental Maps to record Bandscales data. For the most up to date instructions for entering and extracting Bandscales data in OneSchool, refer to the OneSchool Help page listed in **Additional Resources.**

8. Supporting EAL/D learners

Bandscales data provides information about EAL/D learners' SAE language learning and progress indicating proficiency level.

This data is recorded in OneSchool and contributes to the range of evidence schools use to:
- develop a whole school approach to supporting EAL/D students
- inform teaching and learning in the classroom
- monitor students' progress in SAE proficiency and
- report to parents/caregivers.

The *K-12 Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework* outlines the requirements of every student; the expectations for differentiated teaching and learning; and the requirements for each Queensland state school in delivering the curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12.

Additional Resources provide further information on available supports.

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Additional resources

Queensland Department of Education Resources

Bandscales for English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) learners

https://education.qld.gov.au/student/Documents/bandscales-state-schools-qld.pdf

A printable version of the *Bandscales for EAL/D learners.*

K–12 Curriculum, assessment and reporting framework

https://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/stages-of-schooling/k-12

The K–12 curriculum, assessment and reporting framework (K–12 Framework) specifies the curriculum, assessment and reporting requirements for all Queensland state schools' principals and staff delivering the curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12.

Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages Statement

https://education.qld.gov.au/student/Documents/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-languages-statement.pdf

Commitment statement that describes the department's support for Aboriginal students' and Torres Strait Islander students' languages through the 3 Way Strong approach.

Recognising the languages in your family and community

https://education.qld.gov.au/student/Documents/recognising-languages-childs-family-and-community.pdf

Enrolment resource that explains how and why families can indicate the language and lingo they speak at home using the Queensland State School enrolment form.

Identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners – flowchart

https://education.qld.gov.au/student/Documents/identifying-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-eald-learners-flowchart.pdf

A flowchart to support school processes for identifying Indigenous EAL/D learners.

Community Vernacular Language posters and the Guide to using the Community Vernacular Language posters

https://intranet.qed.qld.gov.au/EducationDelivery/indigenouseducation/language-development/Pages/community-vernacular-languages.aspx

Visual resources that showcase examples of contemporary Aboriginal languages spoken in Queensland communities, accompanied by a guide to help teachers develop language awareness and use the posters effectively in classrooms and schools.

OneSchool Help page

https://oneschoolhelp.eq.edu.au/curriculum-and-assessment/e-a-l-d-bandscales-and-developmental-maps/recording-e-a-l-d-bandscale-levels-and-evidence

Step-by-step guidance for recording EAL/D Bandscale levels and evidence in OneSchool.

Bandscales in action

http://learningplace.eq.edu.au/cx/resources/file/fefd41bd-fc43-417f-aa49-224ad8d77043/1/index.html

A series of 25 vignettes demonstrating typical EAL/D learning behaviours from level 1 to level 5 proficiency in listening, speaking and reading/viewing in SAE as described in the Bandscales.

National resources

National Capability framework for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners

https://education.qld.gov.au/student/Documents/capability-framework-teaching-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-eald-learners.pdf

A national framework aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) outlining the knowledge, skills, and practices teachers need to effectively support Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students who are learning SAE as an additional language or dialect.

English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) Hub

https://qld.ealdhub.edu.au/

The EAL/D Hub is a national online professional development resource that provides educators with the skills to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are learning SAE as an additional language or dialect. While it was developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners in mind, many of the theories, strategies, and practices described in the EAL/D Hub would be effective with EAL/D learners from other backgrounds.

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) Resources for EAL/D Learners

https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/student-diversity/eal-d-students

ACARA has developed definitions, considerations, Annotated Content Descriptions, and other resources for teachers delivering the Australian curriculum to EAL/D learners.

QCAA resources

Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) Resources for EAL/D Learners

https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p_10/p-10_eald_resource_list.pdf

QCAA provides resources and videos for teachers identifying and supporting EAL/D learners.

Appendix 1: The diversity of EAL/D learner groups

As noted in *Section 1: Who are EAL/D learners*? there is a wide diversity of EAL/D learners present in a Queensland state school classroom. The information contained in this appendix is intended to assist schools and teachers in identifying and supporting their EAL/D learners.

Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students

Many Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students are multilingual and may speak:
- An Aboriginal language or a Torres Strait Islander language
- New languages, which may be named or unnamed, including creoles (e.g., Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole), Yarrie Lingo, Kriol)
- Standard Australian English (SAE) to varying and context-dependent degrees.

These languages and/or dialects are often mistaken for "informal English" or early SAE, when in fact they are rule-governed linguistic systems with their own grammar, vocabulary, and pragmatics. This misunderstanding frequently leads to under-identification of EAL/D learners. Clear assessment requires recognising that:
- Aboriginal languages or Torres Strait Islander languages are not SAE
- new languages (creoles and other language varieties) are not developing SAE and are **not** errors
- oral confidence in a home language does not equal SAE language proficiency.

The *Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages Statement* (see **Additional Resources**) provides more detail on these languages and on the department's Three-way strong approach for supporting all languages in a students' repertoire while strengthening SAE language proficiency for schooling.

Aboriginal EAL/D learners and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners may or may not have prior exposure to SAE, depending on:
- individual, family, and community language use
- location (urban, regional, remote)
- access to early childhood and prior-to-school programs.

Students in remote discrete communities may encounter SAE for the first time when starting school, making these contexts like EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environments. Students in urban or regional settings may have partial exposure to SAE but still use a home language or dialect that differs significantly from school English. In many rural and remote locations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners make up the majority—or entirety—of the student cohort.

Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners living in remote or EFL contexts require:
- more time to develop SAE language proficiency
- intensive, targeted, intentional SAE language instruction
- explicit teaching of academic vocabulary, grammar, and text structures
- high levels of oral modelling and message abundance
- scaffolded opportunities for meaningful use of SAE alongside their home languages.

EAL/D identification and support should focus on SAE language proficiency across the four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) required for curriculum learning.

Key messages for schools and teachers
- Many Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students are EAL/D learners, even when they appear orally fluent.
- EFL contexts (common in remote discrete communities) mean SAE exposure is limited outside school therefore learners require intensive, explicit instruction and more time to develop academic SAE.
- Home languages are not incorrect SAE and must be respected as linguistic and cultural strengths.
- EAL/D identification is based on SAE academic proficiency, not cultural identity or perceived fluency.
- Culturally responsive, relational pedagogy is essential for supporting engagement, confidence, and SAE language learning. Teachers must create safe, relational opportunities for contribution.

Australian South Sea Islander students

Australian South Sea Islanders are the Australian-born descendants of predominantly Melanesian people who were brought to Queensland between 1863 and 1904 from 80 Pacific islands, but primarily Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. The Queensland Government formally recognises Australian South Sea Islanders as a distinct cultural community with deep historical, cultural and generational ties to Queensland.

Australian South Sea Islanders are all Australian permanent residents or citizens. These students may speak another language at home. Some students may identify as having both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and Australian South Sea Islander heritage.

Key messages for schools and teachers
- Students of Australian South Sea Islander backgrounds are a distinct historical and cultural community, not a subset of Pacific or Indigenous groups.
- Some students may require EAL/D support even though they are Australian citizens and may sound fluent in SAE.
- EAL/D identification must be based on SAE language proficiency, not identity or assumptions.
- Creole or Pacific-influenced language use is not incorrect English. Their language reflects a rich linguistic heritage.
- Culturally responsive pedagogy, strong relationships, and explicit academic language teaching support success.

Māori students (Aotearoa New Zealand)

Many Māori students arrive in Queensland on New Zealand passports, entering Australia under the Special Category Visa (SCV 444). These learners may have been born in Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, or elsewhere. Māori students may speak te reo Māori, Aotearoa/New Zealand English, or a combination of these. Some students may present as confident speakers of conversational English but still be developing proficiency in academic Standard Australian English (SAE).

Many Māori students will have commenced their education in Māori-medium or bilingual settings, such as:
- Kōhanga Reo – early childhood immersion in te reo Māori
- Kura Kaupapa Māori – primary schooling in Māori
- Wharekura / Kura-ā-Iwi – Māori-medium secondary schooling
- Dual-medium or bilingual units in mainstream NZ schools

These learners often have strong conceptual knowledge and literacy in te reo Māori and require targeted support to develop literacy in SAE, particularly in academic vocabulary, decoding English orthography, writing, and subject-specific language.

It is important that teachers and school leaders do not assume SAE language proficiency based on ethnicity, accent, or conversational fluency. EAL/D identification should always be based on a student's demonstrated proficiency in SAE for learning across the curriculum.

Key messages for schools and teachers

- Māori students should not be grouped with students from Pacific backgrounds. Māori are Indigenous to Aotearoa (New Zealand) with distinct cultural, linguistic and schooling traditions.
- SAE language proficiency must be assessed, not assumed. Do not assume Standard Australian English (SAE) proficiency based on New Zealand citizenship or spoken fluency.
- EAL/D identification requires evidence across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Accent, confidence, or conversational fluency do not reflect academic SAE proficiency.
- Māori identity, language, culture, and relationships matter deeply for learning. Culturally responsive practices, affirming identity, and meaningful engagement with whānau—directly enhance belonging, participation, and achievement.
- Classroom behaviours must be interpreted through a cultural lens. Silence, observing before participating, humility, and indirect communication may reflect cultural norms, not disengagement. Teachers must create safe, relational opportunities for contribution.

Pacific Islander students

Pacific Islander students are the Indigenous peoples of the Polynesian, Melanesian, and Micronesian islands, whose cultural, linguistic, and ancestral ties originate from those islands. They may have heritage from Polynesian, Melanesian, or Micronesian nations, including Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and others. These students may be born in Australia, New Zealand, or a Pacific nation. Their linguistic and educational backgrounds vary widely, and this diversity needs to be understood when identifying potential EAL/D learners.

Pacific Islander students are not a single cultural or linguistic group. Their languages, schooling experiences, migration pathways, and English proficiency vary widely. For accurate EAL/D identification and culturally responsive practice, schools should identify students by their specific country or nation of heritage, rather than using a broad "Pacific" label.

Home languages and English varieties students may speak:
- a home language such as Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Cook Islands Māori, Tokelauan, Niuean, or Kiribati
- Standard Australian English or another variety of English

It is common for students to use more than one language or dialect, depending on context (home, community, church, school).

Some students—especially from Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau—enter Queensland with New Zealand passports and birth certificates. This reflects the political relationship of free association with New Zealand, under which citizens of these nations hold New Zealand citizenship.

Holding a New Zealand passport does not indicate English proficiency or guarantee English-medium prior schooling. These students should be assessed based on their SAE language proficiency, not citizenship.

Prior schooling experiences can vary significantly:
- Some students have strong L1 literacy and have experienced consistent English-medium education.
- Others may have been schooled in a Pacific language medium setting or in schools with limited English literacy instruction.
- Schooling in some Pacific nations may place a strong emphasis on oral language, repetition, religious texts, and community-based learning, which may not align with Australian curriculum expectations.

Key messages for schools and teachers

- Use country or nation of heritage to understand students' backgrounds. Pacific Islander students should not be treated as a single group.

- Do not rely on accent, confidence, or citizenship documentation as indicators of SAE proficiency.
- EAL/D identification must be based on assessed SAE language proficiency for learning, including academic reading and writing.

Australian born students of migrant heritage where English is not spoken at home

These students are born in Australia with one or both parents born overseas. They are second generation migrants and may live in a home where:
- SAE is not used
- SAE may not be the only language used
- SAE may be used as a common language between parents without the same first language
- a form of spoken English which differs from SAE is used
- little or no written SAE is used in the home.

These students may be exposed to much, some, little or no print-based literacy in their first language or in SAE prior to entering school. This category also includes learners born in another English-speaking country where their primary language is not the national language.

Key messages for schools and teachers

- Some second-generation migrant students are under identified as they are Australian born and often sound fluent in social SAE. This is not the same as academic SAE language proficiency. Teachers will need to look beyond oral language fluency when assessing proficiency.
- Code-switching and code-mixing are normal multilingual behaviours and is a normal developmental process. This is not a deficit.
- Some students may have strong literacy in their first language. This is an asset and will support SAE literacy transfer.
- Family language practices differ widely and influence learning. For example, some families maintain strong first language use and limited English literacy at home; others use multiple languages, translanguaging, or non-standard varieties of English. It is important not to make assumptions about home literacy or support.

Students who are immigrants from countries where English is not a main language

Students who migrate to Australia from countries where English is not the main language bring highly diverse linguistic, educational, and migration experiences. They may speak one or more languages, including distinct named languages and/or English-lexified creoles. For example, many students from Sierra Leone speak Krio, a creole with English vocabulary but a very different grammatical structure from Standard Australian English (SAE).

These students may arrive in Australia at any age, enter school at any time of the year, and join classes at any stage of the school program. Their prior schooling experiences vary widely. Some students have completed age-appropriate schooling and developed strong literacy in their first language, while others may have had limited, interrupted, or no formal education. Some may have studied English as a subject, while others may have had little or no exposure to English before arrival.

A key consideration for schools is that some learners may sound fluent in English but are not using SAE. Careful assessment is required to avoid misidentifying English-lexified creoles or global English varieties as SAE. This group includes:

Migrants on recognised permanent, temporary or bridging visas

This group includes students arriving as dependants of migrants on permanent visas, temporary visas, or bridging visas. Their parents have permission to live and work in Australia either for a specified period or permanently. These students either hold permanent residency or are in the process of obtaining it.

Some learners in this group may have experienced:
- multiple migrations before arriving in Australia
- changes in language of instruction across schooling systems
- interrupted or inconsistent access to education
- strong academic knowledge developed in another language

As a result, students' English proficiency and readiness for the Australian Curriculum can vary significantly and should not be assumed based on visa category.

Temporary residents on short stays

This group is comprised of students arriving as dependants of temporary visa holders. Their parent/s have obtained a visa to work or stay in Australia for a specified period (indicated on their visa). If they enrol their children in a State School in Queensland, they may or may not be required to pay fees depending on the type of visa they hold. Unlike humanitarian or permanent migrant pathways, temporary resident families are not seeking permanent residency at the time of enrolment.

Temporary resident students may experience high levels of mobility, including:
- contract-based employment moves
- study-related relocations
- uncertain or changing visa conditions
- financial instability during resettlement

These students may have:
- strong literacy in their first language
- partial or inconsistent exposure to English
- limited access to English prior to arrival
- well-developed academic knowledge in another language
- gaps in schooling due to relocation or instability

Their English learning trajectory is shaped by:
- the amount of SAE exposure prior to arrival
- the continuity and quality of previous schooling
- whether English was taught as a subject or used as a medium of instruction
- home language and literacy practices

Key messages for schools and teachers
- Do not assume SAE proficiency based on oral fluency, accent, or visa status.
- Educational backgrounds vary widely and strongly influence learning pace. Students may arrive with strong first-language literacy or with limited or interrupted schooling; starting points are not uniform.
- Migration and mobility affect continuity of learning and wellbeing. Temporary and transitional visa pathways can result in interrupted schooling and stress, requiring predictable routines and targeted support.
- EAL/D identification must be evidence-based and focused on academic SAE. Assessment should consider listening, speaking, reading, and writing for learning— not citizenship, documentation, or conversational confidence.

Students from refugee or humanitarian backgrounds

Students with refugee or humanitarian backgrounds typically arrive on permanent humanitarian visas (e.g., Refugee, Global Special Humanitarian, Protection visas). According to the UNHCR, refugees are people who have fled their countries to escape conflict, violence or persecution.

Many refugee background students have experienced:
- interrupted or no formal schooling, leading to gaps in foundational literacy
- limited exposure to print in any language
- multiple displacements or long migration journeys
- traumatic experiences, including violence, loss, or prolonged instability.

These experiences can influence:
- attention, memory, and cognitive load
- emotional regulation and responses to stress
- participation, attendance, and sense of safety
- confidence in learning SAE and unfamiliar academic tasks

Despite these challenges, refugee learners often bring significant strengths, including, strong resilience and adaptability; multilingual knowledge; cultural depth and global perspectives; and high motivation and respect for school and teachers.

Key messages for schools and teachers

Students with a refugee or humanitarian background will generally require more intensive, long-term and targeted support, including:
- trauma-informed, predictable classroom environments. Trauma can impact behaviour, engagement, and SAE language learning. These students thrive in calm, consistent, culturally responsive classrooms where they feel secure and connected.
- explicit instruction in foundational SAE literacy
- EAL/D-informed teaching with extended timeframes
- strong wellbeing and pastoral support
- collaborative work with families and settlement services.

Students who are Australian and returning from overseas, having lived for extended periods of time in countries where English is not a main language

This group is comprised of students who were born in Australia but have travelled with their parent/s to non-English speaking countries, sometimes going back and forth. These students may have acquired the language of the country they spent time in and may not have acquired full proficiency in SAE due to the nature of their schooling overseas and the lack of SAE being spoken in that country. They may have EAL/D needs when they return to Australian schools.

Students who have Deaf parents and use Auslan as their first language

Children of Deaf Adults who use Auslan as their first language Auslan (Australian Sign Language) is the primary signed language of the Australian Deaf community. Some hearing children of Deaf adults (CODAs) acquire Auslan as their first language. Depending on their exposure to English, some may benefit from targeted EAL/D strategies. Not all CODAs require EAL/D support; many grow up bilingual in Auslan and English.

Deaf children[i]—both those with hearing or Deaf parents—may also use Auslan as their first language. These students are developing bilingual skills in Auslan (a visual language modality) and English (a written and/or spoken language modality). They may benefit from EAL/D strategies to support English development, especially in reading and writing. Educational planning should be individualised and based on bilingual language development principles.

International students from non-English speaking countries

Dependants of international students on student visas

Dependants of international students are school-aged students in Australia with a parent (or parents) who is studying with a Queensland education provider. Their parents enrol school-age students in Queensland state schools by agreement with Department of Education International (DEi) for the period of their parents' study program. They may or may not have EAL/D learning needs and usually return to their country of origin.

Fee paying international students accessing international student programs on student visas

Fee paying international students on student visas, requiring EAL/D support, are provided for as part of the tuition fees paid to schools by DEi. Schools are required to assess students' Bandscales levels as a requirement to receive funding by DEi.

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[i] For Deaf EAL/D learners, the macro skills *"speaking"* and *"listening"* may also include communication via signed languages such as Auslan, signing in English and the use of visual modalities. *Listening* also refers to receptive understanding through sign, gesture, or captions, while *speaking* also includes expressive signing, gesture, or speech, as appropriate to the learner's communication mode.