

HINTS FOR THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM – NEW ARRIVAL AND BEGINNER IN ENGLISH



- Bilingualism is good for you and the use of first language should be supported. Children should be encouraged to speak with those who share the same home language, whenever possible, as its development will aid proficiency with English and there may not be a suitable model for English at home.
- All bilingual pupils achieve most successfully when placed in mainstream classes and taught within their peer group.
- Try to find out whether any materials have come with the pupil. It would be useful to have a previous school report, which could be translated if necessary and jotters to show level of literacy and numeracy assigned in former school. Script(s) used will also become apparent.
- Invite new parents in your classroom to talk about and look at the resources used. The methods used to teach them may have been quite different and they also may not appreciate the importance of their role in helping with homework. It might also be useful for parents to look at examples of completed topic work. At a later date they may be willing to talk to your class about some aspect of life in their country of origin. This would be especially beneficial if that tied in with subjects being discussed in class.
- Assign one or two “buddies” to guide the new pupil around the school, include them in play at interval and gradually introduce to other members of the class. Several reliable pupils on a rotational basis could share this responsibility, as it is quite an exacting task.
- Speak to the pupil in a natural way using vocabulary suitable for his stage.
- Do not always expect an answer. A silent period is perfectly natural, its length varying from pupil to pupil.

- If pupil is literate in their first language use the relevant translated Help Sheet included within this pack.

- Label familiar objects around the class in both English and First Language. The whole class can benefit from learning some vocabulary in a different language as the bilingual pupil learns English. Friezes for colour, numbers, vegetables, parts of the body are, in addition, available from EAL teachers in several different languages. Greetings could also be exchanged in both languages. These strategies also help demonstrate that the first language is valued.
- Involve the pupil in classroom tasks from the beginning. Ask him to help with the routine for giving out books, equipment or cleaning the board. This reinforces classroom vocabulary and hastens the process of being accepted as a class member.
- Sit the child in a group of able pupils who will provide a good model for language, classroom behaviour, completed exercises and the work ethic.
- If literate, encourage the pupil to compile and use a personal dual language wordbook. This will act as a dictionary for developing a list of bilingual key words and instructional language.
- Demonstrate what you want the pupil to do using concrete materials and pictures if possible. It may also be helpful to exhibit an example of the completed task.
- On occasion, encourage first language written responses to the lesson input. Parents could be asked to translate. This would allow the pupil, once the instruction is understood, to respond to the best of his cognitive ability thereby improving self-esteem.
- Pair all pupils for some tasks so that a partnership set up specifically to help the bilingual pupil will not look different.
- Build in support for homework. It is more useful to grade the class homework rather than produce exercises, specific to the bilingual pupil. Do not differentiate for concept but simplify the language of instruction and that expected for completion.
- Games at the end of the day can help reinforce vocabulary. "Simon Says," "Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" and "Heads Down, Thumbs up" employ parts of the body. "The Minister's Cat" is good for alphabetical order. Counting games usually allow the bilingual pupil to shine!
- Pictures, books or photographs of life in the pupil's heritage country introduced into the classroom will help educate all. These will also show that you value diversity and respect the culture of the new arrival. Any class discussions that arise can help reduce the likelihood of racist comments or incidents.

