



33 Overland Dr., Toronto, Ontario M3C 2C3
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English as a Second Language Program

Because every learner deserves to be heard, understood, and empowered.

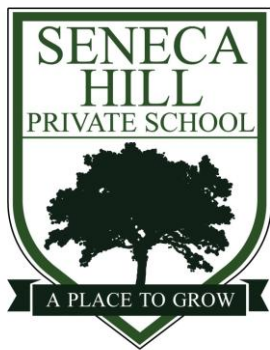
From the moment international students arrive on campus, our ESL program becomes their gateway into the life of the school. We blend research-based teaching, warm relationships, and daily academic support so that your child can master English and thrive—whether they are decoding their first storybook, tackling algebra proofs, or joining friends for after-school clubs. Below you will find the framework that guides our teaching, the pathways students follow, and the many layers of support we provide.

Proficiency Standards Framework

What your child will be able to do—academically and socially.

Our ESL curriculum supports our students, ensuring that progress in English directly fuels success in every subject area.

1. **Social & School Life** – Communicate for social, intercultural, and everyday instructional purposes. Standard One: *English language learners **communicate** for **social, intercultural** and **instructional** purposes within the school setting.*
2. **Language Arts** – Share information, ideas, and narratives with grade-level peers. Standard Two: *English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of language arts.*
3. **Mathematics** – Discuss problems, explain reasoning, and interpret numerical information. Standard Three: *English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the areas of mathematics.*
4. **Science** – Describe experiments, analyse data, and debate scientific ideas. Standard Four: *English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of science.*
5. **Social Studies** – Explain historical events, compare cultures, and present research findings. Standard Five: *English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of social studies.*



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Grade Levels

Kindergarten	Play-based language exposure builds listening, speaking, and early literacy in a nurturing setting.
Grades 1 through 3	Focus on <i>learning to read</i> : phonics, high-frequency words, and sentence patterns.
Grades 4 through 6	Shift to <i>reading to learn</i> : applying literacy skills to content-area texts and projects.
Grades 7 and 8	Intensified academic vocabulary and presentation skills to meet growing subject demands.

Four Language Domains

Each of the five language proficiency standards is divided into the language domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing. While interaction naturally occurs between and among language domains, in this document, they are maintained as separate constructs as one way of thinking about curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Listening: Listening is an active skill. By highlighting an assortment of listening tasks across standards, the need to involve students in active listening and purposeful listening skills development becomes clear.

Speaking: English language learners engage in oral communication in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and in a wide spectrum of settings. As part of oral communication, students are constantly using language in meaningful interaction with others.

Reading: English language learners process, interpret, and evaluate written language, symbols, and text with understanding and fluency. Learning to read in a second language may be enhanced or hindered by students' level of literacy in their native language. Students who have a strong foundation in reading in their first language bring with them skills that can be readily transformed in the process of learning to read in English.

Writing: English language learners use written communication for a variety of purposes and audiences. Writing can be used to express meaning through drawing, symbols, or text. English language learners may come with writing styles influenced by their home cultures.



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Five Levels of Language Proficiency

Level 1 – Starting

At L1, students initially have limited or no understanding of English. They rarely use English for communication. They respond nonverbally to simple commands, statements, and questions. As their oral comprehension increases, they begin to imitate the verbalizations of others by using single words or simple phrases, and they begin to use English spontaneously. At the earliest stage, these learners construct meaning from text primarily through illustrations, graphs, maps, and tables.

Level 2 - Emerging

At L2, students can understand phrases and short sentences. They can communicate limited information in simple everyday and routine situations by using memorized phrases, groups of words, and formulae. They can use selected simple structures correctly but still systematically produce basic errors. Students begin to use general academic vocabulary and familiar everyday expressions. Errors in writing are present that often hinder communication.

Level 3 – Developing

At L3, students understand more complex speech but still may require some repetition. They use English spontaneously but may have difficulty expressing all their thoughts due to a restricted vocabulary and a limited command of language structure. Students at this level speak in simple sentences, which are comprehensible and appropriate, but which are frequently marked by grammatical errors. Proficiency in reading may vary considerably. Students are most successful constructing meaning from texts for which they have background knowledge upon which to build.

Level 4 – Expanding

At L4, students' language skills are adequate for most day-to-day communication needs. They communicate in English in new or unfamiliar settings but have occasional difficulty with complex structures and abstract academic concepts. Students at this level may read with considerable fluency and are able to locate and identify the specific facts within the text. However, they may not understand texts in which the concepts are presented in a decontextualized manner, the sentence structure is complex, or the vocabulary is abstract or has multiple meanings. They can read independently but may have occasional comprehension problems, especially when processing grade-level information.



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Level 5 – Bridging

At L5, students can express themselves fluently and spontaneously on a wide range of personal, general, academic or social topics in a variety of contexts. They are poised to function in an environment with native speaking peers with minimal language support or guidance. Students have a good command of technical and academic vocabulary as well as idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. They can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured texts of differing lengths and degrees of linguistic complexity. Errors are minimal, difficult to spot, and generally corrected when they occur.

Full Support for International Students

Language growth is fastest when students feel connected and supported.

Why Choose Seneca Hill?

Expert Teachers & Small Classes: Certified ESL specialists co-plan with subject teachers, ensuring language objectives are embedded in every lesson.

After-School Tutoring & Homework Club (4:15 – 5:30 p.m.): Daily drop-in help for assignment feedback, vocabulary review, and test preparation—free of charge.

Peer Mentors & New-Student Orientation: Trained student ambassadors help newcomers navigate school routines, make friends, and practice conversational English.

Cultural Activities & Celebrations: International Week, holiday potlucks, and community service projects honour home cultures while fostering new friendships.

Ready to Learn More?

Click <https://www.senecahill.ca/international-students/> or email julia@senecahill.ca to discover how Seneca Hill can help your child find their voice—in English and beyond