

Equitable Assessment Practices for English Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELs/MLs) in Connecticut

A Handbook for Educators



Connecticut State Department of Education
in partnership with the RESC Alliance



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Introduction

This guide answers questions (as of the publication date) about district and district administration responsibilities to engage in high quality and equitable assessment practices of English learners/multilingual learners (ELs/MLs).

The information provided in this document is based on federal and state legislation, federal and state guidance, and research-based best practices.

This document was completed through a partnership between the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the Connecticut RESC Alliance funded through Title III statewide activities funds. Title III funds focus on enhancing academic outcomes for English learners/multilingual learners by increasing the capacity of professionals in the district, school, and classroom to effectively meet the needs of ELs/MLs through research-based and effective practices and strategies, and adherence to federal and state policies.

Please visit the [CSDE English Learner/Multilingual Learner \(EL/ML\) webpage](#) and the [CSDE English Language Proficiency Assessment - LAS Links webpage](#) for additional information.

You may also contact the following staff as appropriate:

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Equity in Assessment Practices

Equitable assessment of English learners/multilingual learners is a critical factor in student success. “If assessment is reliable, valid, and fair (for ELs/MLs) from start to finish, then it can serve as the bridge to educational equity” (Gottlieb, 2016). As English learners/multilingual learners engage in authentic assessment of language and content with high expectations and high support, they are better able to demonstrate their current level of performance, and educators can get a more accurate picture of what students can do, rather than only understanding what they cannot do yet.

According to Gilliland and Pella, “While multilingual students may not score well on standardized tests, other assessments (such as portfolios or first language testing) show that they have knowledge and skills that are not revealed through the tests (Solórzano, 2008). Clearly, a single test cannot capture the wide range of multilingual students’ abilities and assets” (Gilliland & Pella, 2017). As such, it is necessary to implement equitable practices in assessment of English learners/multilingual learners to ensure that students receive a comprehensive education that accounts for students’ growing levels of English language proficiency and allows access to grade-level curriculum.

Resources:

[Civil Rights Principles for Multilingual Learner Education](#)

[A Coherent Vision in California, Rhode Island, Connecticut: State-Level Multilingual Learner Frameworks](#)

[Pathways to Success for Multilingual Learners](#)

[SupportEd Resources](#)

Practices for Equity in Assessment of the Performance of ELs/MLs

1. Assess students who are ELs/MLs on language targets within a given task.
2. Set achievable goals and success criteria for students who are ELs/MLs based on English language proficiency levels.
3. Provide students who are ELs/MLs with supports to access assessments based on English language proficiency levels and individual needs.
4. Provide comprehensible and actionable feedback to ELs/MLs before, during, and after the task is complete.
5. Interpret assessment results with considerations for growing English language proficiency.

Annual English Language Proficiency Assessments

Each year, students identified as English learners/multilingual learners are required under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to take an English language proficiency (ELP) assessment to measure growth in language proficiency.

The State of Connecticut uses this performance data to gauge a school district's relative success in the accountability system. See the links below for information about how the performance on these ELP assessments is used to measure school and district level accountability, (Indicators 2E and 2F).

The CSDE has two ELP assessments: the LAS Links and the Connecticut Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency (CAAELP). English learners/multilingual learners with an active Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Plan are potentially eligible for accommodations on the LAS Links assessment, depending on the nature of their disabilities. For a small percentage of special education students with a disability or multiple disabilities that significantly impact intellectual functioning and functional adaptive behavior, requiring intensive instruction and substantial supports, the CAAELP is available if they meet eligibility requirements. In order for students to exit EL/ML status and no longer receive English language acquisition support, they must reach the state mandated exit requirements. The linguistic standard selected is based on the assessment administered.

The CAAELP was developed to assess English language proficiency for ELs/MLs with the most significant cognitive disabilities.¹ This assessment meets the unique needs of these students and enables the measurement of their progress toward attaining English language proficiency based on [alternate performance standards](#).²

Both the LAS Links and the CAAELP measure English language proficiency in the domains of Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. For more information on either assessment, see the resources below.

Resources:

[CSDE English Language Proficiency Assessment - LAS Links webpage](#)

[Connecticut DRC LAS Links Website](#)

[CSDE CAAELP Page](#)

[LAS Links Accessibility Chart](#)

[CAAELP Resources Page](#)

[CT LAS Links Growth Model](#)

[Using Accountability Results to Guide Improvement](#)

¹ "English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities" is a term used in federal law. In this document, both that term and the term "English learners with significant cognitive disabilities" are used to mean "English learners/multilingual learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities."

² The term "alternate performance standards" corresponds to the term "alternate achievement standards" used in federal law. The term indicates that the performance to which students are held may be different from those for other students, even though the targeted English language proficiency standards for the student's grade are the same.

Reflection Questions:

- How does the district build understanding of the ELP Assessment and the impact on district success in the accountability system?
- How and to whom does your district share the results of the English language proficiency assessments?
- How is the district analyzing LAS Links and CAAELP data? Who is involved in that process? What might be some of the trends in performance?
- How do those trends in performance inform decision-making at the district, school, program, and classroom levels?

Standardized Measures of Literacy, Math, and Science for English Learners/Multilingual Learners (Smarter Balanced Assessment, SAT, and NGSS Assessment)

All students engage in summative, standardized assessments to measure performance in English language arts and mathematics in Grades 3-8 and 11, and in science in Grades 5, 8, and 11. English learners/multilingual learners, regardless of when they arrive, must take these assessments. Students who are identified as ELs/MLs are entitled to designated supports designed to create more equitable access to the assessments. In addition, ELs/MLs with disabilities are eligible to receive accommodations in accordance with their IEP or Section 504 Plan.

Pursuant to Connecticut State Statute Sec. 10-14n. Mastery examination:

(f) (1) For the school year commencing July 1, 2015, and each school year thereafter, the scores on each component of the mastery examination for students who are English language learners, as defined in section 10-76kk, and who have been enrolled in a school in this state or another state for fewer than twenty school months, shall not be used for purposes of calculating the accountability index, as defined in section 10-223e, for a school or school district.

(2) For the school year commencing July 1, 2015, and each school year thereafter, mastery examinations pursuant to subsection (b) of this section shall be offered in the most common native language of students who are English language learners taking such mastery examinations and any additional native languages of such students when mastery examinations in such native languages are developed and have been approved by the United States Department of Education.

English learners/multilingual learners are entitled to designated supports, including native language, during the summative assessment process and should practice using these tools during coursework and classroom assessment.

Students identified as EL/ML with the most significant cognitive disabilities may be eligible to participate in the Connecticut Alternate Assessments including Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA), Connecticut Alternate Science Assessment (CTAS), and the Connecticut Alternate Assessment of English Language Proficiency (CAAELP) as they progress through their K-12 education.

The CAAELP items are designed to gather evidence that students are progressing toward or meeting the [Alternate English Language Proficiency \(ELP\) Standards for English Learners with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#) adopted by the participating states (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2019). These standards highlight and amplify the critical language, knowledge about language, and skills using language in the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers' [College and Career Ready Standards](#).

Resources:

[CT State Department of Education Special Populations on the State Summative Assessments](#)

[CT State Department of Education Using Accountability Results to Guide Improvement](#)

Reflection Questions:

- How is your district and/or program ensuring all students who are ELs/MLs have access to designated supports on summative assessments (e.g., Smarter Balanced, SAT, and NGSS)? How might you decide which designated supports are appropriate for individual ELs/MLs?
- How are students using designated supports during coursework and district/classroom assessments? How are those decisions being made at the district, program, school, and classroom levels?

Standardized Measures of Literacy and Math Assessment of English Learner/Multilingual Learner Performance (Universal Screeners)

“Universal screening measures are a critical component of a comprehensive, standards-aligned reading instructional program. Pursuant to [Section 10-14t\(a\) of the Connecticut General Statutes \(C.G.S.\)](#), the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has approved reading assessments for use by local and regional boards of education to identify students in Kindergarten to Grade three, inclusive, who are below proficiency in reading, and published the [Approved Menu of Research-Based Grades K–3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments](#). Commencing July 1, 2016, these reading assessments have been approved for use by districts to “assist in identifying, in whole or in part, students at risk for Dyslexia, as defined in Section 10-3d of the C.G.S., or other reading-related learning disabilities” (Hickey, 2018).

English learners/multilingual learners engage in the aforementioned Universal Screeners, but it is *critical* to interpret performance of these assessment results acknowledging English learners’ growing English language proficiency levels, in order to prevent unnecessary intervention or retention. In the analysis of the data, best practice dictates that educators with understanding of second language acquisition, English learner performance, and individual student learner profiles be included in the process.

Resource: [Reliability and Validity for ELs/MLs on CT Universal Screeners](#)

Reflection Questions:

- How does the district’s Universal Screener account for varying levels of English language proficiency?
- How might an ELs’/MLs’ levels of performance be impacted by their English language proficiency level?
- What might be other pieces of evidence that indicate an ELs’/MLs’ performance levels in literacy and math?
- How is the information being communicated to all stakeholders?
- How does English learner/multilingual learner performance factor into decision-making at the instructional level?

Interim Assessments of Language Growth: Authentic, Embedded, Performance-Based Assessment

According to EdGlossary, “An interim assessment is a form of assessment that educators use to (1) evaluate where students are in their learning progress and (2) determine whether they are on track to perform well on future assessments, such as standardized tests or end-of-course exams. Interim assessments are usually administered periodically during a course or school year (for example, every six or eight weeks) and separately from the process of instructing students” (Great Schools, 2013).

While there are no current standardized interim English language proficiency assessments that are predictive of LAS Links or CAAELP performance, the current annual English language proficiency assessments, teachers can develop and/or use authentic, curriculum-based assessments to determine student progress toward English language proficiency.

Types of Interim Assessments of Language

- English Language Development (ELD)/English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) curriculum-based assessments
- Mainstream curriculum-based assessments with embedded language targets
- Portfolios of language samples

Reflection Questions:

- What is the district or program’s process for assessing language proficiency and growth outside of the annual assessment of English language proficiency (i.e., LAS Links assessment)?
- What is the process for administering and analyzing language performance data? How might your district include experts in ESOL and bilingual education in analysis of language performance data?
- How might you ensure increased validity and reliability of interim assessment processes?

Selecting/Designing Tasks for Assessing Language Performance

Language is composed of four domains — speaking, listening, reading, and writing — and its linguistic divisions — phonetics (sounds), grammar (syntax and morphology), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (contextual meanings). Language is both receptive — listening and reading — and productive — speaking and writing. The principle goal in acquisition of any language is to be able to communicate and understand ideas in the target language effectively with a given audience and register (style, vocabulary, dialect, formality) and cultural context.

Language skills function in concert to create meaningful communication. The following is a sampling of skills and knowledge needed to be proficient in any given domain. Disabilities, such as being deaf/hard of hearing or mute, can affect a student’s performance in any given domain.

Domain	Skills/Knowledge
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of content, author’s craft, style, tone, text structure, etc. • Background knowledge • Comprehension (e.g., activating, inferring, comparing, determining the author’s purpose, determining the main idea, evaluating, monitoring/clarifying, predicting, questioning, recognizing literary elements and text features, retelling, searching/selecting, sequencing, summarizing, synthesizing, and visualizing) • Concepts about print • Decoding • Phonemic awareness • Phonological awareness • Fluency (e.g., the ability to read effortlessly and with prosody) • Grammar and syntax knowledge • Letter recognition • Vocabulary knowledge/word meaning
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author’s craft moves • Awareness of audience, purpose, and task • Discourse patterns in the socio-cultural context • Grammar • Letter formation • Literary elements • Modes of writing (e.g., opinion/argument, informational, or narrative) • Paragraphing • Register • Spelling patterns • Style • Syntax • Text features • Text structures and organization • Tone • Transitional language • Vocabulary

Domain	Skills/Knowledge
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to norms in the socio-cultural context • Awareness of audience, purpose, and task • Discourse patterns in the socio-cultural context • Fluency • Intonation • Pronunciation and sound patterns • Register • Rhetoric • Style • Summarizing, synthesizing • Tone • Transitional language and organization • Vocabulary • Volume, speed, eye contact
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to norms in the socio-cultural context • Background knowledge • Comprehension (see above in "Reading" section) • Discourse patterns in the socio-cultural context • Phonemic awareness • Sound recognition and determination of minimal pairs • Syntax • Vocabulary knowledge/word meaning

In selecting or creating a task to gauge English language performance and/or growth, it is critical to determine what aspects of language are being assessed and determine which CT English Language Proficiency (CELP) Standards align to those components. Use the CELP Standards "Cheat Sheet" below to assist in determining the language that aligns to the standards.

Resource:

[CELP Standards "Cheat Sheet"](#)

In addition to selecting the appropriate corresponding standard, it is important to consider the socio-cultural context in which the language task is set. "Socio-cultural context refers to the idea that language, rather than existing in isolation, is closely linked to the culture and society in which it is used. This means when language is learnt, the socio-cultural context in which it is used needs to be taken into consideration as well" (BBC, n.d.). As such, ELs/MLs need access to the socio-cultural context during a task in order to best command language choices for the given purpose and audience. For example, if a student is engaging in a debate, they must understand the norms of debate and build background knowledge of the topic in order to demonstrate their command of language structures, vocabulary, and content knowledge.

Resource

[ELP Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#)
[Equal Access to Elementary and Secondary Education for Students who are English Learners with Disabilities](#)

This is a document created by CCSSO that contains alternate English language proficiency standards for English learners/multilingual learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities in Grades K-12.

Resource:

[Empowering ELLs Social-Cultural Context with Task Examples](#)

Sample Tasks for Assessing Language Performance and Growth

When assigning these tasks, teachers should provide linguistic supports to ensure access. In addition, some adjustments should be made based on the students' grade level. This table aligns to the CELP Standards. A list of Proficiency Descriptors with aligned evidence for a student who is EL/ML with a significant cognitive disability is provided by grade level beginning on page 13 in the [ELP Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#).

Task/Content Area	CELP Standards/ Language Domain(s)	Evidence of Language Performance	Task Ideas
<p>Constructed Response to Open-Ended Question</p> <p><i>Content area:</i> ESOL, ELA, CTE, math, science, social studies, or unified arts</p>	<p>1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</p> <p>Reading and/or Writing</p> <p>Speaking and/or Listening</p>	<p>Determine to what degree the students can: identify critical concepts; formulate ideas into a coherent and logical structure; provide evidence and/or details; use transitional language effectively; use target vocabulary; construct accurate sentences</p>	<p>C-E-R</p> <p>Discussion board</p> <p>Discussion protocols (see "Discussion Participation" below)</p> <p>FlipGrid/SeeSaw/Vocaroo</p> <p>Match evidence/reasoning with claim</p> <p>Written response</p>
<p>Discussion Participation</p> <p><i>Content area:</i> ESOL, ELA, CTE, math, science, social studies, or unified arts</p>	<p>2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</p> <p>Speaking and Listening</p>	<p>Determine to what degree the students can: present ideas; ask for clarification; restate an idea; compare ideas; synthesize ideas; question or challenge an idea; add on to others' thinking; agree or disagree with an idea; understand and use target vocabulary; adapt language to discussion; use transitional language and talk moves effectively; construct sentences and questions accurately</p>	<p>Discussion Board</p> <p>Debate/Four Corners</p> <p>Fishbowl</p> <p>FlipGrid/SeeSaw</p> <p>Four A's</p> <p>Hot Seat/Role Play Inside-Outside Circles Jigsaw</p> <p>Discussion Philosophical Chairs Pinwheel Discussion</p> <p>Second Set Partners Socratic Seminar Think-Pair-Share</p> <p>Turn and Talk</p> <p>World Cafe</p>

Task/Content Area	CELP Standards/ Language Domain(s)	Evidence of Language Performance	Task Ideas
<p>Opinion/ Argument Essay</p> <p><i>Content area:</i> ESOL, ELA, CTE, math, science, social studies, or unified arts</p>	<p>4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10</p> <p>Writing</p>	<p>Determine to what degree the students can: present ideas; provide evidence and reasoning; use target vocabulary; use transitional language effectively; construct paragraphs logically; present ideas in logical order; construct sentences accurately</p>	<p>Advertising campaign Advice column Essay Explanation of Claim (e.g., The two lines must be parallel because...) Letter to editor, author, principal, community member, parent, public servant, etc. Proposal for a new business venture Public service announcement Short documentary</p>
<p>Oral Presentation or Informational Writing</p> <p><i>Content area:</i> ESOL, ELA, CTE, math, science, social studies, or unified arts</p>	<p>3, 7, 9, 10</p> <p>Speaking or Writing</p>	<p>Determine to what degree the students can: present ideas; provide details and examples; use target vocabulary; use transitional language effectively; construct sections logically; present ideas in a logical order; construct sentences accurately</p>	<p>Brochure Essay/Report Graphic organizer Infographic Instruction manual Interpretation and explanation of a visual stimulus (e.g., image, graph, data set, etc.) Museum exhibit News article Poster Recipe Slide show Speech Timeline Website Video</p>

Task/Content Area	CELP Standards/ Language Domain(s)	Evidence of Language Performance	Task Ideas
<p>Story Retell</p> <p><i>Content area:</i> ESOL or ELA</p>	<p>1, 9, 10</p> <p>Reading or Listening</p>	<p>Determine to what degree the student can: identify text elements in fiction or nonfiction; use transitional language effectively; present core elements of the text in a logical order; provide key details; construct accurate sentences</p>	<p>Book talk without the ending</p> <p>Oral retell</p> <p>Recorded retell on FlipGrid/SeeSaw/Vocaroo</p> <p>Storyboard events and all transition words</p> <p>Written retell</p>
<p>Storytelling or Narrative Writing</p> <p><i>Content area:</i> ESOL or ELA</p>	<p>3, 7, 9, 10</p> <p>Speaking or Writing</p>	<p>Determine to what degree the student can: use text elements to craft a story; use transitional language effectively; use descriptive language; use figurative language; logically structure the story; logically structure paragraphs for a given purpose (e.g., set the scene, develop characters and character relationships, set up the conflict, build tension, resolve the conflict, etc.); employ elements of author's craft; construct accurate sentences</p>	<p>Genre-based written story (e.g., memoir/personal narrative, fable, myth, play, contemporary fiction, etc.)</p> <p>Graphic "novel" (low tech or with technology)</p> <p>Oral storytelling Storyboard</p> <p>Tell the story based on the images in a wordless picture book, picture prompt, etc.</p>
<p>Summary of a Text</p> <p><i>Content area:</i> ESOL, ELA, CTE, math, science, social studies, or unified arts</p>	<p>1, 7, 9, 10</p> <p>Reading or Listening</p>	<p>Determine to what degree the student can: identify text elements in fiction or nonfiction; use transitional language effectively; determine central idea(s) or theme(s); present core elements of the text in a logical order; provide key details and/or evidence; use target and key vocabulary; construct accurate sentences</p>	<p>Book talk Book trailer Oral summary</p> <p>Recorded summary on FlipGrid/SeeSaw/Vocaroo</p> <p>Written summary</p>

Reflection Questions:

1. What language domain(s) are to be assessed (speaking, listening, reading, and/or writing)?
2. What aspects of language do students need in order to be successful in completion of the task (phonetics, semantics, grammar, pragmatics)?
3. What are the language targets that are aligned to CELP Standards and ELP Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities?
4. What is the relevant, authentic context for the task that aligns with the learning goals, content area skills and knowledge, and developmental levels of students?
5. What is the intended purpose and audience for the task?
6. What are the success criteria (see below) for the task?
7. Which language supports (see below) might students need in order to get access to the assessment based on the students' English language proficiency levels?

Setting Success Criteria for Effective Assessment for Language Performance and Growth

In order to effectively assess student language growth, we need to measure student performance against a set of criteria based on the CT English Language Proficiency (CELP) Standards Proficiency Descriptors, if applicable [ELP Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#), and content area standards (e.g., [CCS](#), [NGSS](#), [CT Social Studies Standards](#), etc.).

Resource:

[CELP Standards Proficiency Descriptors](#)

Success criteria is a tool used to help both teachers and their students assess how well they have achieved the learned target. Emphasizing and subsequently providing effective feedback around success criteria has been shown to have a moderate impact on student achievement (Hattie, 2008).

Resource:

[Motivation and Success Criteria](#)

While most curriculum documents and course materials (e.g., programs, textbooks, etc.) provide objectives that students are working toward, most of those curricular resources do not include success criteria.

Sample Language Targets and Success Criteria

Grade Level	CELP Standards Targeted & Language Domain	Intended Language Target <i>I can...</i>	Access Points <i>What supports do ELs/MLs (at various levels of English language proficiency) need to be successful?</i>	Success Criteria <i>How do I know I have achieved the target?</i>
K	CELP 1 Reading	I can retell the story.	<p>Level 1: Pictures to order and visual supports of key transition words provided (e.g., numbered First, Then, Next, Finally)</p> <p>Level 2: Sentence frames and bank of words and phrases from the story supported with visuals</p> <p>Level 3: Sentence frames and visuals from story</p> <p>Level 4: Transition words and sentence frames</p>	<p>I can orally retell the story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> in order <input type="checkbox"/> including sequence words <input type="checkbox"/> including story elements (e.g., characters, setting, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> in simple sentences
3	CELP 2 Listening	I can respond to my peers in discussion.	<p>Level 1: Nonverbal participation prompts (e.g., thumbs up/down; translation; picture participation cards, etc.)</p> <p>Level 2: Sentence starters and options (e.g., either_or); word or phrase banks</p> <p>Level 3: Sentence starters; provides directed questions (e.g., which is the more important detail: what Mateo or what Diego shared?)</p> <p>Level 4: Sentence starters</p>	<p>I can respond to my peers in discussion (do at least one of the following):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for clarification <input type="checkbox"/> Restate an idea <input type="checkbox"/> Compare ideas <input type="checkbox"/> Question or challenge an idea <input type="checkbox"/> Agree or disagree with an idea
6	CELP 3 Speaking	I can explain how I solved a math problem.	<p>Level 1: Operations cards with visuals; manipulatives; graphic organizer for each step; Prompting questions (e.g., show me what you did first); native language</p> <p>Level 2: List of words and phrases with visual supports; manipulatives; graphic organizer for each step; native language</p> <p>Level 3: Sentence frames; word bank of mathematical terms;</p> <p>Level 4: Word bank with transitional language</p>	<p>I can orally explain the steps I used to solve a math problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> in order <input type="checkbox"/> using math vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> using transitional language <input type="checkbox"/> identifying strategy/ strategies used

Grade Level	CELP Standards Targeted & Language Domain	Intended Language Target <i>I can...</i>	Access Points <i>What supports do ELs/MLs (at various levels of English language proficiency) need to be successful?</i>	Success Criteria <i>How do I know I have achieved the target?</i>
10	CELP 4 Writing	I can defend a claim about the most critical impact of WWII.	<p>Level 1: Given a claim, select from given pieces of evidence, illustrate the evidence with pictures or symbols, native language</p> <p>Level 2: Select a claim from given list; select from given pieces of evidence; highly structured paragraph frame</p> <p>Level 3: Write a claim; select from highlighted pieces of evidence from provided text; sentence frames</p> <p>Level 4: Sentence frames; transitional word list</p>	I can defend a claim: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> with evidence from reliable sources <input type="checkbox"/> explaining what the evidence means <input type="checkbox"/> explaining how that evidence connects to the claim, is logical and defensible <input type="checkbox"/> with transitional language

Reflection Questions:

1. What content and CELP Standards are being assessed in the task?
2. Once you have determined the content target, what language skills are students using in order to attain that goal?
3. Which of those language skills will be taught during instruction leading up to this assessment?
4. What supports do ELs/MLs (at various levels of English language proficiency) need to be successful?
5. How do students know they have achieved the target?

Supports for Access to Assessments

English learners/multilingual learners are entitled to designated supports to gain access to the mainstream and ESOL curriculums. Supports should be determined based on a student's (1) age, enrolled grade, and developmental level, (2) English language proficiency level, (3) previous schooling experiences (i.e., ways of knowing or experience being a student in the American school system, and (4) content area of study (i.e., skills, background knowledge, Tier II and III vocabulary needed to be successful with a task in a given content area). Supports can be individualized based on these factors and should change over time, as ELs/MLs grow in their English language proficiency. In addition, these supports during classroom assessments should mirror those that are available on state standardized assessments (see above) but not be limited to these supports. For students with disabilities, accommodations and/or modifications for individuals should also be included in the assessment plan.

Resource:

[CELP Standards Linguistic Supports](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. What are the factors that impact a student's ability to engage with the content of the assessment (see 1–4 above)?
2. Which supports reduce the linguistic load for students and maintain the content expectations for ELs/MLs at different proficiency levels?
3. What might be the best, grade-appropriate supports for the given task?

Performance Analysis in Teacher Data Teams/Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Educators regularly engage in data teams, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), or Professional Learning Groups (PLGs). Irrespective of the title of these groups or the process(es) the group uses, one of the goals is to look at student data to determine further instructional interventions needed to group students in order to review or advance student learning. Educators might use the ATLAS protocols for authentic student work and data (see below) and use the CELP Standards Proficiency Descriptors to augment their understanding of what students are working on and what misconceptions might exist about the content or language. When educators review and discuss the performance of English learners/multilingual learners, it is critical to determine what ELs/MLs are able to do based on their English language proficiency levels using the CELP Standards Proficiency Descriptors or [ELP Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#) Proficiency Descriptors (if applicable), and respond accordingly.

Some indicators of ELs'/MLs' growing language proficiency in a given task may include:

- over application of a rule, structure, organizational structure, or discourse pattern learned (e.g., capitalization of all words instead of only proper nouns and first words in a sentence);
- application of a rule, structure, organizational structure, or discourse pattern from the home language(s) in English (e.g., reversal of adjective and noun in a noun phrase like in Spanish "*car red*" or *not included claim statement at the beginning of argument essay*);
- inaccurate use of a rule, structure, organizational structure, or discourse pattern not yet acquired in English;
- use of syntactically simple sentences;
- use of general vocabulary, often repeated through the written text and/or limited use of target academic vocabulary;
- misuse or limited use of figurative language including imagery, similes, metaphors, etc.; and/or
- misuse or limited use of transitional language.

Resources:

[CELP Standards "Cheat Sheet"](#)

[CELP Standards Proficiency Descriptors](#)

[Atlas Protocol Looking at Student Work](#)

[Atlas Protocol Looking at Data](#)

[ELP Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. What language skills do students need in order to have been successful in performing this task (refer to the [CELP Standards "Cheat Sheet"](#) and/or [ELP Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#))?
2. What are my English learners/multilingual learners able to do in the given targets factoring in their English language proficiency levels (refer to the [CELP Standards Proficiency Descriptors](#))?
3. What aspects of language are they working on? What is evident in their work?
4. What improvements have they shown since a previous assessment task? What is evident in their work?
5. What aspects of language still need to be acquired/taught? What is evident in their work?

Actionable and Comprehensible Feedback for English Learners/Multilingual Learners

Effective feedback to learners is part of the learning process, as ELs/MLs need to reflect on and then subsequently improve practice in English. According to Swain (2005) and Long (1985), both reflection on language use and negotiation of meaning about the language output allow ELs/MLs to acquire more and more accurate language. Just the act of providing high quality feedback deepens their language usage and knowledge about language.

Some key ideas to keep in mind while providing feedback to ELs/MLs:

- Provide feedback on erroneous language patterns that interfere with listener/reader comprehension
- Focus on a limited number of points to which you want students to respond in reflection, correction/revision, or performance on future tasks
- Provide comprehensible feedback with supports for access (e.g., native language, visuals, models, etc.)

Resources:

[American Language Learning Institute "Providing Feedback to English Learners"](#)

[CELP Standards Proficiency Descriptors](#)

[ELP Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#)

[Empowering ELLs "Express-Lane Editing"](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. What are the language target(s) and success criteria for the given task?
2. What is the next step in the progression of English language proficiency given those targets (refer to the CELP Standards Proficiency Descriptors and if applicable ELP Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities)?
3. What are the patterns of errors that are present in the written task and have the biggest impact on audience understanding?
4. What supports might ELs/MLs need in order to access the feedback (e.g., native language, visuals, models, etc.)?
5. How might the quantity of feedback impact the student's ability to learn and grow from the feedback?

Equitable Grading Practices

Grading and standards-based grading in particular present a challenge to educators who are determining and assigning grades. When we think of equity, we must keep in mind that equal does not mean equitable. While districts and schools may use a single set of criteria by which to grade all students, it does not mean that all assignments are created with access points for all learners.

If an assessment is designed with equitable access points for all learners, including ELs/MLs, determining and assigning grades comes easier but not without challenge.

Even with sufficient access points and linguistic supports in place, ELs/MLs with growing language proficiency may still generate products of learning that lack the linguistic complexity (in English) of their monolingual peers. However, we must keep in mind that we cannot penalize students for their growing English proficiency.

If those determining and assigning grades know (1) the language targets based on CELF Standards for a given task and (2) the students' ability to perform to those targets based on their English language proficiency levels as outlined in the CELF Standards Proficiency Descriptors, then they are better equipped to grade equitably.

Resources:

["The Five Pillars of Equitable Grading ELLs"](#)

[Empowering ELLs "Grading Newcomers"](#)

[CAPELL Grading Guidance](#)

[Larry Ferlazzo and Grading ELs](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. What are the language target(s) and success criteria for the given task?
2. According to the CELF Standards Proficiency Descriptors, has the student performed in accordance with their English language proficiency level for a given standard?
3. What tools and protocols are you using to increase the reliability in the grading process for English learners/multilingual learners (e.g., CELF Standards, content area standards, rubrics, calibration, etc.)?
4. How might you build teacher capacity to grade equitably for ELs/MLs in your district, program, or school?
5. How does the grade communicate to what degree the student achieved success on a given task? Does the grade make sense for the given audience (e.g., parents, families, other educators, college admissions, etc.)?
6. What additional information might accompany a given grade to promote learning, growth, and self-reflection?

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