



THE QUESTION

How can school systems use the results of state English Language Proficiency assessments along with progress monitoring tools in the classroom to determine instructional implications to supporting language development for English Learners?

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English Learners and School Success

Multilingual children and youth represent an increasing number of the students in our schools. Their life, community, and home experiences enrich our classrooms and represent an asset to the future of our communities. Some of these students are still in the process of developing English and receive support from a variety of language programs to engage in meaningful learning at our schools. In federal law, these children are referred to as English Learners (ELs) and accountability measures have been developed to support their academic success. These annual measures — which include language proficiency and academic achievement assessments — intend to create a picture of how successful our schools are in supporting ELs' learning. However, in order to enact instructional practices that help ELs be successful, these annual measures are not enough. Consequently, many schools and districts find themselves needing to collect additional information throughout the year.

Many schools have established comprehensive assessment systems that include annual assessments as well as interim measures of academic achievement for all their students, including those identified as ELs. These data help educators act in a timely and appropriate manner to meet ELs' academic needs. Yet, these systems often do not provide enough information about the language growth of ELs. This brief focuses on how schools can use the results of their annual measures of language proficiency along with progress monitoring tools in the classroom to determine instructional implications to supporting language development for their ELs.



THE EVIDENCE

Developing a Coherent Language Assessment System

A coherent assessment system means that all the assessments in the system are connected to one another. This connection allows educators to compare data from the various assessments that are part of the system: results from their annual test, district interim assessments, and classroom assessments. Over time, if using a coherent assessment system, schools can also ensure continuity of the data collected about students' language growth.

One way to achieve coherence is by ensuring that there is a meaningful connection between content and language assessments. This connection can be achieved by using the content as the context for language assessments to guide instruction and the context for interim assessments to monitor language growth throughout the school year. Consider the example of two classroom assessments below:

Language Assessment A	Language Assessment B
<p><i>Fill in the correct form of the verb for each sentence:</i></p> <p>Yesterday, Linda _____ (eat/ate/eaten) some celery for lunch.</p> <p>I _____ (go/went/gone) to the movies with some friends last weekend.</p>	<p>A 3-2-1 exit ticket at the end of science class:</p> <p><i>Share 3 activities we did today that were helpful.</i></p> <p><i>Name 2 ideas about what we discussed today that you found interesting.</i></p> <p><i>Write one question you still have.</i></p>

Notice that in example A, students show what they know about language in a very specific way that may be unrelated to the content curriculum being taught. In example B, students are asked to write about the curriculum and educators can use their answers to learn more about what they can do with language *within* the context of that curriculum.

An educator can use the example above to guide their instruction, but also to ensure coherence to the larger assessment system. To monitor progress, schools can achieve coherence by using student work already collected for monitoring

progress about the academic content curriculum and looking at it again through the lens of language. Examples of student work that can be used to monitor progress include:

1. Writing samples: Some districts focus on narrative, informative and argumentative genres at various times of the school year and collect samples on them at certain times of the year. The same samples can be assessed using a language lens.
2. Oral presentations: Some schools have oral presentations or interviews as part of certain units that can be recorded and then evaluated using language as the focus.
3. Portfolio artifacts: Some school systems already collect artifacts throughout the year that highlights student learning. Additional artifacts highlighting language use can be included.

By using student work that has already been collected for other purposes, educators minimize additional testing to capture information about their students' language use. If schools do not have such assessments in place, educators can create common assessments to collect this information on a regular basis.

Collecting evidence of how students use language is only the first step. The next step is to apply a language lens to the evidence collected

Applying the Language Lens

Once the evidence of student language performance has been identified, the next step is to determine tools that can be used to examine the data. To ensure coherence to the larger assessment tools, schools use tools that align to the language standards they use. This ensures that the data can be compared to the data from annual English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessments.

For educators that are members of the WIDA Consortium, one of these tools can be the **WIDA Interpretive rubrics**. These rubrics are based on the same criteria used to define the levels in **ACCESS for ELLs**, the annual ELP assessment and other instructional resources, like the **Can Do Descriptors**.

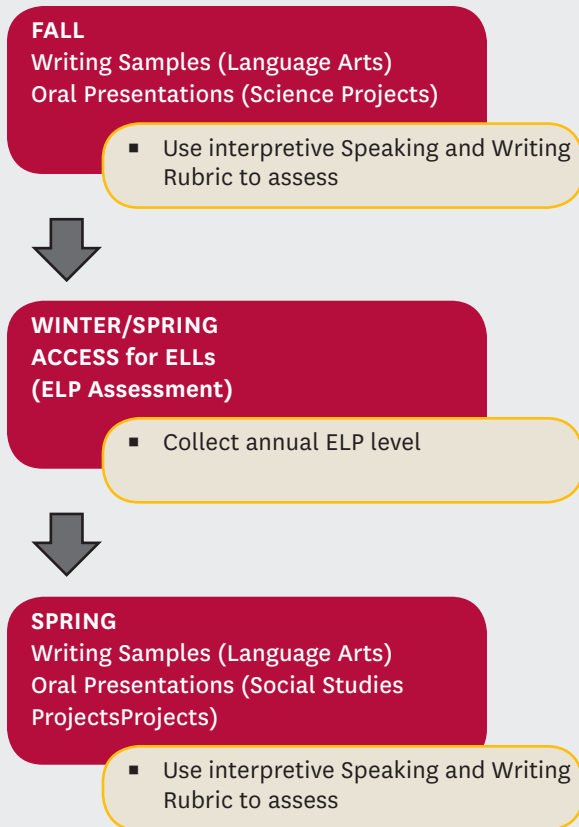
The interpretive rubrics can be used as assessment tools in interim and classroom assessments. Classroom teachers can make use of this data right away during instruction, using tools like the Can Do Descriptors to scaffold instruction so that ELs can participate meaningfully in teaching and learning. Over time, the data collected through the use of these tools can be recorded to examine students' language growth. Because it is based on the same criteria as the annual ELP assessment, the data from all of these assessments can be compared and used together to make instructional decisions on behalf of ELs.



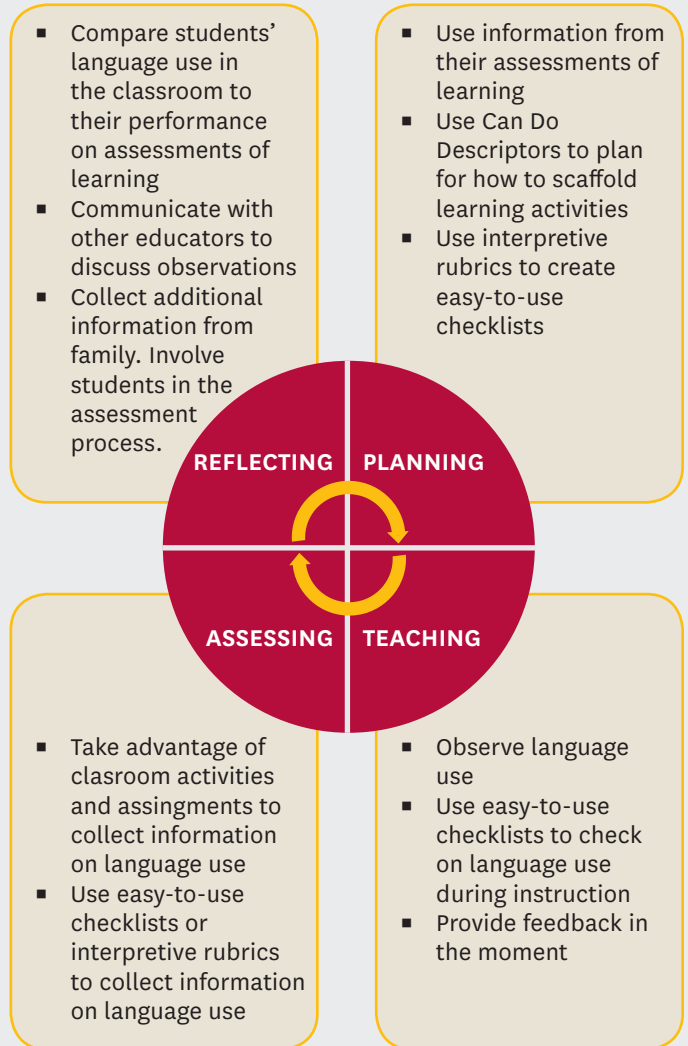
CONCLUSION

Implementing a Progress Monitoring System

A comprehensive assessment system has measures of learning, **for** learning, and **as** learning. Educators can collect information of students' language use at various times during the year as measures of language development. The figure below shows an example of what this might look like:



Assessment *for* language development, on the other hand, is formative in nature and serves to guide everyday instruction. Educators collect information on their students' use of language during instruction and provide feedback in the moment.



Assessment *as* learning is the engagement of students in ongoing self-assessment and reflection on their own learning. Developing checklists or translating existing rubrics into student-friendly language facilitates students' involvement in monitoring their own learning, including setting their own language goals. Using these tools as the starting point ensures that student-friendly tools also align to the larger comprehensive system.

Including language as part of your assessment system enhances opportunities for action towards educational equity for ELs.