CHAPTER 6

ASSESSMENT OF CONTENT-AREA LEARNING

When students' language, culture and experience are ignored or excluded in classroom interactions, students are immediately starting from a disadvantage. Everything they have learned about life and the world up to this point is being dismissed as irrelevant to school learning; there are few points of connection to curriculum materials or instruction and so students are expected to learn in an experiential vacuum. Students' silence and non-participation under these conditions have frequently been interpreted as lack of academic ability or effort; and teachers' interactions with students have reflected their low expectations for these students, a pattern that becomes self-fulfilling.

Jim Cummins, *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society*

Chapter Outline

Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Defend the use of content-area assessment with students still developing English proficiency.
- Implement and interpret the results of formative content-area assessments.
- Design and prepare students to succeed on summative content-area assessments.
- Implement and advocate for assessment practices that appropriately maximize students' native languages.
- Audit classroom-based assessments for potential bias.
- Use content-area assessment results to inform your grading practices.
- Hold informed conversations with administrators, colleagues, and parents about implications of content-area assessment for CLD students' programming.

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to content-area learning, teachers and school administrators look at multiple factors to determine the kinds of assessments they need to utilize to create a cumulative picture of students' skills and performances. Content-area learning is often categorized in terms of outcomes and learning objectives. The assessments that U.S. school districts plan for students are designed to document student achievement, measure gains, and indicate which aspects of the curriculum need to be revisited.

In many instances, state and local education agencies have responded to legislative initiatives by utilizing overarching standards of achievement, which support assessment of student progress and alignment of instruction. Many districts follow state-directed criteria related to standards that are intended to provide guidance, consistency, and accountability for what is taught in U.S. classrooms, regardless of the setting, teaching style, and student demographics. These standards and criteria serve as the contextual framework for teachers to plan and deliver their instruction. They also provide a blueprint of sorts for school districts to maintain accountability regarding the achievement of *all* students, including historically excluded groups such as English learners and those with special needs (Herrera & Murry, 2006; Lara & August, 1996; Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005).

Long-standing gaps in student achievement are evident in comparisons between mainstream students and English learners. For instance, average scores for English learners in grades 4, 8, and 12 on the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading and math were significantly lower than those of native speakers of English—a gap that continued to widen with increasing grade levels (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2015). Research has demonstrated that issues with reliability and validity can exist when assessments developed mainly for native English speakers are used with English learners (Abedi, 2006). In addition, one of the main reasons we have seen this gap in achievement is because we often categorize the needs of English learners under a broad umbrella of language proficiency. We hold the notion that English learners will not be able to perform well on content-area assessments while they are still developing their language proficiency. Although this notion does remind us of the necessity to minimize bias in content-area assessment—because lack of language proficiency can lead to a lack of understanding of questions on a given assessment—we need to be able to utilize student performance data to inform our instruction.

Most teachers readily recognize the difficulties that language can present to student achievement. In their efforts to address these challenges, however, teachers may create an imbalance in their instruction. They may tend to follow either an inadvertent or an intentional focus on language development while at the same time overlooking the importance of students' acquiring core grade-level concepts. Although teachers may have the best of intentions, such actions may actually widen the learning gap for CLD students (Collier & Thomas, 2004, 2009; Ramírez, Yuen, Ramey, & Pasta, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 2002, 2012).

Although the level of second language (L2) acquisition positively correlates with academic success, we also know that it generally takes a minimum of 5 to 7 years for students to learn a second language to the level necessary for full participation—without accommodation—in classroom instruction. Keeping this thought in mind, it becomes necessary to think in terms of classroom accommodations and interventions that can help ensure students make gains both academically and linguistically. Language and content development need to happen simultaneously, or CLD students will find it nearly impossible to catch up to their native-English-speaking peers.

Content-area assessment plays a very definite role in teaching and learning. It is essential for informing us about how well CLD students are learning academic material during the period in which they are also acquiring English. Given the myriad languages, cultures, and backgrounds of our students, a great deal of reflection and planning is needed as teachers find ways to access, uncover, and maximize the content-area skills and knowledge that CLD students bring to the classroom.

The following questions can guide teachers as they plan their own approach to content-area learning and assessments:

- What am I trying to find out about my students' learning?
- What learning goals or outcomes do I want to measure?
- What kind of evidence do I need to show that my students have achieved the goals/outcomes?
- What kind of assessment will give me that evidence?

When working with CLD students, it especially important for teachers to consider instructional elements that will support their ability to gather valid and reliable assessment information. The following questions reflect attention to student learning dynamics that are key to attainment of our assessment-related goals:

- Which strategies will guide students to reach intended language and content objectives of the lesson?
- Under what conditions (levels of support) does each particular student learn best?
- What can students do with what they have learned?
- In what ways will students' linguistic and academic growth be documented during the lesson?

Given the learner's ability to drive his or her own instruction, teachers are challenged to go a step further to consider how assessment can be used to increase students *desire* to learn and their feelings of competence that they are *able* to learn (Herrera, 2016; Ruiz-Primo, 2011; Stiggins, 2002). Assessments that are aligned with standards and curricula; chosen, developed, or accommodated to be reliable indicators of learning; and valued by students and teachers for their authenticity will support us to reach these goals.

In this chapter, we highlight specifics of assessing CLD students' content-area learning. Our discussion focuses on both formative and summative assessment measures. We explore the value of using different types of assessments in different ways, and at different times, to better understand the dynamic relationship between teaching and learning, while also preparing students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on high-stakes tests. We also delve into what we can learn from such assessments and how we can use resulting information in our instruction to promote the achievement of all students.

VOICES *from the* FIELD 6.1

I have learned to think critically about assessments in class. Does this assessment truly measure mastery of the content? Should this assessment be viewed in a formative or summative way? Does this assessment need to be for a grade or not? What feedback will this assessment give my students? Will students be able to use this feedback to improve their own learning and understanding of their progress? How will this assessment impact student motivation?

Travis Hampl, Middle School, Social Studies Teacher. Reprinted with permission.

FORMATIVE CONTENT-AREA ASSESSMENT

Formative assessments are tools and strategies employed by grade-level and other teachers to determine what and how their students are learning so that instruction can be modified accordingly while it is still in progress. This process is somewhat like referring to a compass every few miles to check your direction rather than waiting until you have reached the end of the line (or not) to realize you were on the wrong track. Formative assessments enable educators to make teaching more responsive. They largely depend on teachers' knowledge, their ability to create classroom environments that invite student engagement and expression, and their observational skills (Herrera, 2016; Johnston & Afflerbach, 2015). For instance, as Johnston and Afflerbach illustrate, "we can learn a lot about children's word knowledge from their invented spelling, provided the classroom environment encourages it and teachers know how to interpret it." Formative assessments can be either informal or formal. Both types are discussed in this chapter.

Informal Formative Assessment

Perhaps no single form of assessment is as effective for the teacher or as beneficial for the CLD student as informal formative assessment. The tools typically associated with this type of assessment hold the capacity to reveal the nature and strength of *incremental* academic progress. For the teacher, the assessment of incremental progress provides a more realistic, authentic portrait of the student's capacities as well as her or his strides in both language acquisition and content-area learning. The knowledge gained from these assessments reduces the potential frustration of many teachers and keeps their instructional accommodations focused on incremental, but ongoing, progress.

VOICES *from the* FIELD 6.2

In my kindergarten classroom, small centers are a way students are assessed informally. Each center has an objective, which most students will meet at about the two-week mark. Students must complete activities at their center by either playing a game, completing a puzzle, sorting objects, answering questions, matching letters or numbers, or reading sight words. The activities completed in small centers are designed to help students advance by providing various ways of completing the same objective. Since small centers are focused on individual skill areas, it is easy to see where students are struggling. The consistency of working on specific content areas and then retesting helps give me a good perspective on where my students are and how much they have progressed over a couple of weeks. This helps me modify activities and ways of teaching for the students who are struggling. I constantly speak with the paras [paraeducators] and ESL [English as a second language] teachers who are also involved with students in my classroom. We talk about what we see and discuss different strategies to help students learn difficult content.

Donita Estes, Kindergarten Teacher. Reprinted by permission.

For CLD students, the assessment and documentation of these incremental gains tend to both lower the affective filter and enhance motivation for new learning. Too often, formal assessment measures fail to provide these students with any sense of progress and accomplishment. In contrast, informal formative assessments provide opportunities to encourage, motivate, and challenge these students to higher levels of academic achievement and language acquisition.

Inquiry Assessment/Inquiry-Based Learning

Before reading *Bob the Snowman* (Loretan & Lenica, 1993) to her kindergarten class, Ms. Lam asks if anyone has ever seen a snowman. Most have not, but several volunteer that they have indeed seen a *real* one on TV or in a movie. Ms. Lam begins reading the story of a snowman living up North who is told by a migrating bird how beautiful everything is, and how much more fun it is, in the South. Bob decides he'd like to go there, too. Ms. Lam draws the students' attention to the picture of Bob in the snowy North and the bird in the sunny South and asks the class if Bob should go. They respond with a resounding "Yes!"

Ms. Lam: Look at where Bob lives now. Is it hot or cold?
Several voices: Cold!
Ms. Lam: How can you tell it's cold?
Juan: (He raises his hand and then points to the picture of a boy in a coat.)
Ms. Lam: Good thinking! I wear a coat when it's cold, too. Who wore a coat to school today? (Several heads shake "No.")
Ms. Lam: Why didn't you wear a coat, Marisa?
Marisa: It's too hot!
Ms. Lam: What's it like in the South? Is it hot or cold? (The picture shows the bird in a palm tree on a sunny beach.)
Class: Hot! (Ms. Lam turns the page as Bob begins his journey.)
Ms. Lam: As Bob heads for the train station . . .
Marco (in an apparent non sequitur): Bob's got a snow cone head!
Ms. Lam: Yes, his head and body are made of snow like a snow cone. How many of you have ever had a snow cone? (Eight hands fly into the air.) What happens to snow cones on a really hot day?
Julia: My snow cone melted in the park.
Juan: It gets water.
Marisa: Bob's going to melt!

With this revelation, the class revises their advice to Bob, although he travels anyway. Eventually, he does melt, turns into a puddle, evaporates, becomes a fluffy cloud, blows north, gets heavier, and returns home in the form of new-fallen snow. This wonderful story has different levels of concepts that range from basic vocabulary and emotions to prediction, sequencing, weather, states of matter, life cycles, cause-and-effect patterns, and story format.

Ms. Lam had used this book easily in her previous school but had never encountered a group like this, in which no one had experience with snow. She was ill prepared for the initial inability of her students to see a problem with Bob's plan. By relating Bob's head to a snow cone, Marco provided a context that bridged others' prior learning with unfamiliar concepts and allowed the students to work at higher levels of understanding throughout the remainder of the story. Ms. Lam decided, and noted in her reflection journal, that when she introduces *Bob the Snowman* next year, she'll

remember not to limit prior learning connections to the snows of her New England past but also include the snow cones of her students' Laredo, Texas, present.

One of the most common types of informal formative assessment occurs in the dialogue of teaching, as exemplified by this vignette. The information teachers receive from the process of *inquiry-based assessment* can inform them about students' developing language skills and content knowledge. Dialogue that evolves during the inquiry-based learning process is a product of real-time formative assessment that occurs as the learning unfolds. When students engage in social learning of this kind, they have opportunities to receive various types of embedded feedback (Learning and Teaching Coordinating Network, 2016).

Research demonstrates that teachers who recognize and differentially respond to student learning behaviors (e.g., individual responses to questions) during spontaneous interaction positively influence student learning (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). For some teachers, this begins rather intuitively, is reinforced through experience, and is best validated by the success of their students. It becomes a natural part of how they teach. These teachers catch those on-the-fly moments in which clarification, connection with prior learning, and probes of higher-order thinking keep all learners engaged with the curriculum and continuing to move forward.

To get a reliable window into the content-area learning of English learners, teachers particularly need to take care when structuring the types of questions posed. For example, newcomers like Juan in the scenario can often demonstrate comprehension of targeted information by pointing to an object, word, or picture or by responding yes, no, thumbs up, or thumbs down to simple questions. Teachers can accommodate students' language levels by using basic "wh" questions, and then "how" and "why" questions, before they attempt more abstract prompts or complex questions. Sample prompts and questions in a discussion about *Bob the Snowman* might include the following:

- "Show me the snowman."
- "Where is it cold?"
- "Who spoke to Bob?"
- "Should Bob go south?"
- "Why not?" (Students with limited proficiency in English can demonstrate advanced thinking by pointing to the sun, just as Juan pointed to a jacketed child to answer the inferential question, "How can you tell it's cold?")

Inquiry assessment can also take the form of a whole-class inclusion activity. For example, prompts like the following could be used for an activity in which each student has a sheet with pictured objects and animals:

- "Point to the cheese."
- "Who ate the cheese?"
- "Point to all the animals."
- "Which animal is bigger, the dog or the horse?" (answer embedded)
- "Which animal [vehicle, dinosaur, etc.] do you like best?"
- "Raise your hand to tell me *why* you like it best."

In a science conversation about plants, questions might include:

- "Does our plant need water?" (thumbs up, thumbs down)
- "Does our plant need soil, or dirt?"

- "Does our plant need ice cream?"
- "Does our plant need sun?"
- "Does our plant need snow?"
- "Raise your hand to tell me why you think it does or does not need snow."
- "Raise your hand to tell me how you think the plant gets food."

Open-ended questions are more difficult but have value as a modeled and anticipated form of query that can be answered by others or with the support of native language partners until CLD students are ready to respond independently. Figure 6.1 summarizes types of questions and prompts that are appropriate for students in different stages of second language acquisition.

In all cases, visual referents and use of the native language as a resource provide much-needed support until a student's performance suggests that she or he no longer needs the assistance. Thinking of instructional questions as keys rather than probes is helpful. Each is uniquely shaped to open a specific door, inviting a student to bring his or her knowledge into the learning zone. In constructive

Figure 6.1 Questions and Prompts According to Stage of SLA

The sentence/questioning stems included here are categorized by a specific stage of language acquisition for illustration purposes only. Students may move rather quickly through the stages, or they may be ready for more advanced questioning despite the majority of their language skills reflecting a lower level of proficiency.

Preproduction	**Early Production**
Questions or directives that students can respond to or follow before they are ready to speak • Where is _____? • Show me the _____. • Bring me the _____. • Point to the _____. • Touch your _____. • Who is wearing _____? • Put the _____ on the _____. • Give _____ the _____. • Who wants _____?	Yes/no questions • Is this a _____? • Is a spider an insect? Either/or questions • Did Billy go to a store or park? • Is this food or clothing? One- to two-word response questions • Who is the line leader today? • What is Kenya riding? Questions that elicit naming items from groups or categories • What animals did we see at the zoo? • Which of these were marsupials?
Speech Emergence	**Intermediate Fluency**
Questions that require elaboration • *Why* did Will miss the bus? • *How* did he get to school? • *What happened* when he got to school? Questions that ask for more information • *Tell me about* your vacation. • *Describe* your favorite place.	Questions that inspire/probe higher-order thinking skills • What will happen if? . . . • How are _____ and _____ alike? • How are they different? • What would you do if . . . • What do you think about . . . • How did you vote and why?

Source: Based on Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (n.d.). Sample assessment instruments. Curriculum Frameworks Project. Author.

classroom environments, this door remains open for access to prior knowledge and experiences that are the bricks and mortar of each student's ability to construct new knowledge.

When classroom teachers use predictable patterns of conversation assessment, students begin to anticipate questions and think about the material in terms of inquiry. This can occur, however, only when adequate time is provided for responses. It is not uncommon for teachers to wait less than one second for a response after they pose a question. If no student response is provided in that time, they are likely to either ask another question or answer the question themselves (Bond, 2008; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004; Kaur & Hashim, 2014). This practice excludes the CLD student, who requires more time to process language, and all students need time to be able to formulate their thinking. As Bond (2008) explains, before students can reply, they must hear the question, determine whether they understand the question, and recall information from memory. All this takes time.

If we teachers want serious thinking from our students, we must be willing to provide them the time necessary to make it happen (Sun, 2012). The only kinds of questions a student can answer within a very short time are generally those requiring very little thought or formulation. Rather than facilitating or assessing higher-level thinking, these types of questions merely probe the efficiency with which students memorize facts.

To develop questioning as a formative assessment tool, we must go beyond the standard questioning procedure. We cannot merely ask the question, have students respond to it, and move on. Questioning in itself is a strategy that becomes formative in nature when we pose questions to seek information that we then interpret and use to enhance and develop our students' language and content knowledge (Jiang, 2014). As Jiang explains, to facilitate this process we should:

1. Pose questions that are pivotal to students' construction of understanding.
2. Seek responses that make known students' thought processes, which provide teachers with the most useful information for instruction.
3. Respond by providing meaningful interventions that guide students along the way to achieving their learning objectives.

assessment FREEZE FRAME 6.1

Thinking of instructional questions as keys rather than probes is helpful. Each is uniquely shaped to open a specific door, inviting a student to bring his or her knowledge into the learning zone.

Teaching Tips:

- Adapt the language of the question for maximum comprehension.
- Formulate questions that elicit deeper levels of thought but can be answered without complex language.
- Allow adequate time for responding.
- Affirm "I don't know" answers as opportunities to engage the class in brainstorming ways to make sense of the material.
- Use questions as a means for reciprocal language use; as the student provides an answer, use that answer to further probe with how or why questions.
- Leverage questions to elicit interaction among learners; when posing a question, ask students to dialogue with each other in pairs or small groups before formulating a response.

As students' language proficiencies increase, their attention to the higher-level language in cognitive prompts and responses of others encourages their own processing of the concepts at more advanced levels. The objective of this type of assessment approach is to determine what the student has learned from the lesson and what that implies for instruction.

U-C-ME (Uncover, Concentrate, Monitor, Evaluate) Strategy

Grade Level: 2–12

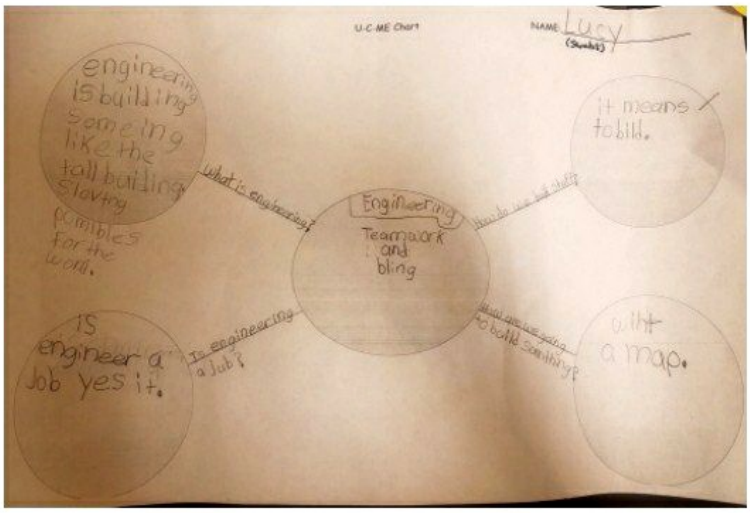
Materials:

- Copies of the U-C-ME template (one per student)

Directions:

- *Uncover*
  - Place students in small groups and give each student a blank U-C-ME template.
  - Have students write the name of the topic/concept that is the focus of the lesson around the outside of the center oval.
  - Ask students to write down everything they "bring to the table" or know about the topic/concept in the center oval. Encourage students to write down information in their native language if they prefer.
  - Have students discuss ideas with peers.
- *Concentrate*
  - Ask students to think of specific questions they may have about the topic. Model this first by posing sample questions for two or three of the spokes. Generate questions that require students' higher-order thinking skills.
  - Have students work as a class to pose their own questions for the remaining spokes. Together, the questions will become the guide for student learning.
  - During instruction, make sure to concentrate on information that can be used to answer the questions.
  - To guide students, you may want to create a whole class U-C-ME template on which you model how to document key learning.
- *Monitor*
  - Have students monitor their learning by placing responses to each of the questions posed in the corresponding ovals (see Figure 6.2).
  - Provide opportunities for students to discuss their responses with peers in their small group.
- *Evaluate*
  - The final evaluation of student understanding can be done by having students use what was written in the ovals to summarize what they learned about the topic or concept.
    - Persuasive or narrative paragraph
    - Oral conversation with a peer (discussing what was learned and where or how it was learned)

Figure 6.2 Assessment Artifact: U-C-ME



This artifact depicts the completed U-C-ME graphic organizer of a second grader who is a native Swahili speaker in the Speech Emergence stage of second language acquisition. The teacher, Mr. Gruber, adapted the standard strategy template to meet the developmental needs of his learners. Reflecting on his use of the strategy, he shared:

> As a second grade teacher, I was impressed at how fast students picked up the understanding of engineering ideas and how quickly vocabulary words were being used independently. . . . The chart [U-C-ME template] can be adapted to fit the abilities of all students. Teachers may have to lead the students in younger levels whereas older students can be more independent with using this chart. Overall, the goals of developing students' vocabulary, proper English comprehension/usage, and content knowledge can be met by using this strategy.

Observing Students:

Circulate among students to note their connections to background knowledge as they uncover what they know. Pay attention to what students subsequently share with one another in their small group conversations. Resulting insights can be used to highlight predictions about the topic and unique skill sets or knowledge among the community of learners. Similarly observe students as they monitor their understanding. Information gathered will support your ability to emphasize key aspects of the curriculum and the learning process and redirect if necessary. Continued observation of students during the evaluation phase of the strategy will enable you to provide additional targeted feedback to individuals and to the whole group.

Differentiating Instruction:

- Jot down notes about student thinking and performance as you proceed with the lesson. Anecdotal notes on students' connections to background knowledge will inform the links you make to boost relevance of the content.
- Make sure to document students who struggle with the process of generating questions. This skill is critical for active reading, and it can be revisited as students proceed with reading the text during the lesson.
- Student thinking that stands out as an example of innovation, collaboration, personal progress, struggle, or self-doubt will inform your in-the-moment response as well as your evaluation and feedback on the final product/performance.

Additional Notes:

This strategy can be used with any content area and repeated as often as desired. After initial modeling and with consistent use, this strategy can quickly become a student learning strategy that CLD students are able to apply to learning in other areas of their life.

Source: Adapted from Herrera (2016), p. 171.

Observation Assessment

> José struggles self-consciously and quits prematurely when called on to read in class. It seems he is still a nonreader. One day Mrs. Kay notes that he follows along well with his fingers as other students read aloud, pausing precisely where they do. In that moment, she makes a preliminary assessment that he may in fact be reading silently but is not yet able or ready to read aloud unsupported. She alters her instruction by having the whole class read the next paragraph together. Ms. Kay watches as José reads the entire paragraph aloud with the class and makes a note in her anecdotal log. She excitedly decides to have students do this again tomorrow, alternating choral reading with student-read sentences to see if José will be more comfortable or capable of reading smaller segments by himself.

Through cycles of observation and modification, teachers such as Ms. Kay are informally assessing their students throughout the day. *Observation assessment* is another type of informal formative assessment that is particularly useful in the accommodation of CLD students. Teacher observations made during instruction can provide information that may be crucial to determining the root of a student's difficulties, or a particular strength, with content-area material. Such observations also enable teachers to provide students with opportunities to build their confidence and readiness to attempt higher levels of classroom involvement.

The advantage Ms. Kay has is that she also documents these instances of informal assessment and uses the new information to alter her instruction according to the learning responses of her students. This ongoing refinement (similar to the kind of responsiveness previously discussed in relation to questioning) allows her to zero in on the zones in which her students are capable of maximal growth as she adjusts her teaching to those levels.

A potential drawback to a reliance on unplanned informal assessment is that even highly significant observations that occur in the course of instruction are likely to remain unrecorded. The primary reason is that too much is happening in a dynamic classroom. That's one reason that ready-made or teacher-created observation checklists are popular. These can take many forms, limited only by the teacher's creativity, preferences, and time. One method, adaptable to any setting, involves listing all or selected students along the left side of a single page and targeted curricular behaviors along the top. As illustrated in Figure 6.3 (and the related appendix resource), a teacher can easily note with narrative detail or a simple checkmark the occurrence of observed behaviors during specified or unspecified activities. Checklists are especially helpful when educators observe students in action, working collaboratively, or exhibiting unpredicted or spontaneous evidence of skills (e.g., correctly counting change for the vending machine). Documentation of the conditions in which a behavior occurs, as well as those in which it does not, can be instructive in the design of future learning environments, activities, and interventions.

Informal observation assessment can also look at how well students learn through their own observations. Many of us can cite examples of students learning

Figure 6.3 Observation Checklist

Student Name	Follows directions without a model	Uses nonverbals to communicate understanding or express needs	Uses single words to answer questions or express needs	Uses simple sentence structures for social purposes	Uses simple sentence structures for curricular purposes	Other comments or observations
Ahmed A.	X	X	X	X		Said, "I play too?" on playground
Feliciana G.		X				Hasn't cried all week
Mindy H.		X	X	X		Needs to watch before doing
Luciano L.	X	X	X			Words just now emerging
Ghassem M.	X	X				Joins play during recess
Van N.	X	X	X	X	X	Volunteers during whole group
Sara N.	X	X	X	X		Talkative in Housekeeping Center
John (Kang) V.	X	X	X			Asks for help/chooses snack

ACCOMMODATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES 6.1

Effective use of scaffolded observation is demonstrated in the following scenario:

Ms. Reyes looks out on eight kindergarten students circled in front of her on the carpet. They excitedly eye her plain brown bag. They've seen it before. It always holds something different . . . but it's always something fun! Ms. Reyes carefully removes each item, labeling, describing, and discussing its use. There are two cans of frosting (vanilla and chocolate), several toppings (shredded coconut, yellow candy stars, and red sprinkles), plastic knives, spoons, paper napkins, plates, and two kinds of cookies. Ms. Reyes intentionally calls on those with the strongest language and academic skills first. All eyes are riveted on the cookies.

Ms. Reyes: Josh, would you like a cookie?
Josh: Yes, please.
Ms. Reyes: Which kind would you like, a white sugar cookie or a brown chocolate cookie?
Josh: A brown chocolate cookie.
Ms. Reyes: Let's put your cookie on a plate. How would you like me to decorate it? I have . . . (she points while naming all the options).
Josh: Chocolate frosting.
Ms. Reyes: Here's the chocolate frosting. What should I do with it?
Josh: Put it on the cookie. (Ms. Reyes puts the can of frosting on the cookie. There is silence and then the students laugh.)
Josh: No, you have to open it. (She opens the can.)
Josh: Put it on the cookie . . . please. (She begins to set the can on the cookie a second time.)
Josh: Not the can; put the *frosting* on the cookie! (Ms. Reyes looks into the can, puzzled.)
Josh: Put the knife in. (She puts the knife in and leaves it.)
Josh (laughing): Scoop it out and put it, no, *spread* it on the cookie!

This pattern of scaffolding, modeling, and self-expansion continues through all phases of decoration. The finished cookies are set aside until all are completed, and the process becomes more efficient with successive student turns, even though several students face communicative challenges. The language use of CLD students is noticeably more specific and complex under these conditions than during regular classroom discourse. The students enjoy the humor of the lesson but also realize Ms. Reyes will follow their instructions explicitly, attending to words such as *in, on, more, as much, enough, spread, shake, sprinkle,* and so forth. Academic vocabulary pertaining to color, size, position, and quantity concepts also becomes meaningful in this context.

Ms. Reyes observes when students are unable to produce the targeted structures and modifies her prompts accordingly. For example, Nahla has been in school 2 months and has little prior exposure to English. Observation checklists reveal she uses mostly single words and gestures to communicate in the classroom. By the time her turn arrives, Nahla has been watching intently. She knows what she wants and has grasped the most significant words that will make that happen. With every classmate's previous turn, she has very likely rehearsed her own requests.

Nahla: Cookie . . . chocolate!
Ms. Reyes: You want a chocolate cookie? Here's a chocolate cookie. Do you want frosting?
Nahla: Chocolate frosting . . . please. (Nahla does not wait for a prompt.) Put knife . . . frosting on cookie.

Later, in response to Ms. Reyes's sprinkling of only a tiny amount of red candy on top, Nahla shakes her head and before a model can be provided says, "Not enough . . . more candy, please."

Although the lesson seems simple, in a very short time Ms. Reyes has added another important dimension to her own

(Continued)

ACCOMMODATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES 6.1 (*Continued*)

knowledge about how Nahla and the other students learn. This informal yet deliberate assessment has indicated that several students not previously thought to have acquired many kindergarten concepts did indeed have the cognitive ability to learn curricular material in a highly communicative lesson that maximized the learning potential of anticipatory observation. Given other indicators, Nahla was only expected to use single words and perhaps demonstrate recognition of one or two colors. Instead, after observing others' work, she responded at multiple levels by using expanded utterances and grasping unanticipated curricular concepts.

As illustrated in this scenario, one of the most exciting aspects of differentiated instruction is that it also allows for differentiated assessment. Such purposeful differentiation can occur in a variety of contexts at all academic levels. ■

negative behaviors by watching others, but this natural tendency to learn by example can also be drawn on positively during classroom instruction. Children have been found to learn just as effectively through intently observed activities as those experienced hands-on. This is particularly potent for CLD students who are going through periods of relative silence or acculturation (as discussed in Chapter 4) but who may be able to learn well through scaffolded observation and instructional accommodations. Central to the concept is that the observed activity is understandable and that there is an anticipation of imminent or eventual participation (Rogoff, 2014).

Structured Authentic Assessments

Ms. McKinley knows that CLD students in the early stages of second language acquisition might have difficulty comprehending a science unit on plant parts. Therefore, she and some of her fellow teachers designed a science activity with language modifications that would enable the participation of all students in the class. The activity involves having students work in heterogeneous (Spanish and English) pairs to identify the parts of an illustrated plant. As one modification (see Figure 6.4), the students are given an unlabeled diagram of the plant along with word cards in Spanish and English for the different plant parts. The partners take turns placing the Spanish and English words in the appropriate blanks. Students check their work using a plant diagram that is labeled with terms in both languages. When the activity is used as an individual assessment, each student is given an unlabeled diagram and a set of the Spanish and English word cards. The student then glues the word cards in (or near) the blanks.

Although educators occasionally are fortunate to observe behaviors related to desired skills in unplanned situations, most of the time the skills demonstrated by students will depend on the opportunities inherent in the educational activities that teachers plan. As explored in depth in Chapter 2, the design of structured authentic assessments reflects teacher efforts to develop activities that maximize student demonstration of curricular knowledge and skills. The preceding vignette illustrates that teachers of CLD students also plan modifications that will help ensure students' assessment performance accurately conveys their abilities related to target knowledge and skills. Authentic assessments such as this provide learners the opportunity to demonstrate conceptual knowledge without being hindered by language challenges.

Label these parts of this plant:

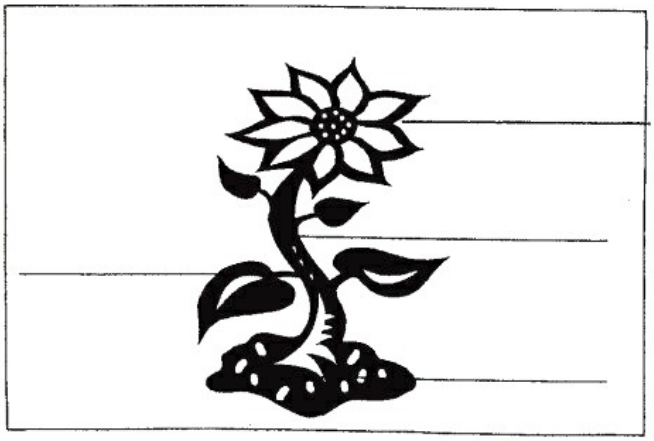


Figure 6.4 Plant Part Identification

flower	flor
flowers	flores
stem	tallo
leaf	hoja
root	raíz

Another of the many ways to assess students in authentic contexts is to develop situations or scenarios in which students exhibit targeted skills while working toward the creation of a project or product. In such contexts, students are engaged and motivated to draw on all their skills and resources to achieve an identified goal. The following scenario illustrates the effective use of an authentic, cooperative group assessment with CLD students.

> Ms. William's 2nd-grade class is studying living creatures and their environments. They recently had the opportunity to visit the local zoo and see many animals. The zoo guide was interesting but talked much too fast for some of the English learners. Fortunately, Ms. William had made sure that native-English-speaking peers were included in each group of students to facilitate understanding. She knew that using the native language helps students learn, but some of the English-speaking students also do a very nice job of retelling information in creatively comprehensible ways.
>
> During the zoo visit, the students were encouraged to take notes or draw pictures to remind themselves of the most interesting details about the animals or places they saw. Later, each group used this information to develop questions for the other students. The questions often required that students give detailed descriptions of the animals or their environment. A checklist guided the students to develop at least one

question each about an animal classification (e.g., Turtles and snakes belong to which group?), a geographical region (e.g., Name three animals that live in the jungle.), animal eating habits (e.g., What do ducks eat?), and a predatory relationship (e.g., What animal likes to eat ducks?). As students quizzed one another, they noticed how many different correct answers were elicited from each group.

The next day, students continued to work in groups to design their own zoos. Ms. William informed them that the zoo would be located just outside town, so they needed to consider the region's weather conditions and determine each animal's appropriateness for the zoo or need for shelter. Students were asked to include at least one type of animal that did not live in the zoo they had visited the previous day. The plan of the new zoo was to have more animals living together in realistic habitats than in the current zoo. The primary task for students was to create three habitats where at least 15 animals (five in each habitat) could live safely.

As they worked together, the students pooled their previously learned (but still fresh) knowledge. Jesse wanted the zoo to have chickens but knew from experience that chickens shouldn't live anywhere near foxes or snakes. Linda wanted prairie dogs in the farm habitat because cows, goats, and horses don't eat them. However, Sam knew that prairie dog burrows could break the horses' legs. When they finally finished, each group prepared to present its zoo to the class.

The class checked the ideas of each group by using a rubric to determine whether the group could (a) describe each habitat; (b) explain the reason for its plants, shelter, and boundary type; (c) explain why each animal was chosen; and (d) describe each animal's main traits. When Ms. William heard the groups share their final presentations, she was confident that all the students in her class had gained a far greater and more durable understanding of the curricular concepts (as well as greater ability to generalize them) than if she had just spent an entire week on verbal lessons followed by a paper-and-pencil test.

assessment FREEZE FRAME 6.2

The design of structured authentic assessments reflects the efforts of teachers to strategically select strategies that maximize assessment of curricular skills and knowledge.

Teachers can also follow this type of collaborative activity with individual tests, a group test in which all members work together to discuss and record the answers, or a combination of both.

Teacher-Made Tests

Mr. Jin places on the floor three pictures (covered, or pasted inside down-turned paper plates), which will serve as the possible answers to a question. He then explains to the class that one of these is the correct answer to the question he is going to ask, but rather than focusing on the choices, they should first try to see if the answer pops into their heads. He reads the story-based question from the board.

Mr. Jin: What was the main setting for *Charlotte's Web*? (As he nods to their raised hands, the students volunteer "a farm" and "a fair.")
Mr. Jin: Are those names for the same place, or were there different settings in this story?
Class: Different settings.
Mr. Jin: Yes, let's reread the question together.
All: What was the main setting for *Charlotte's Web*?
Mr. Jin: The question asks for the *main* setting. What does that mean?
Sara: Where they were most of the time.

SNAPSHOT from *CLASSROOM PRACTICE* 6.1

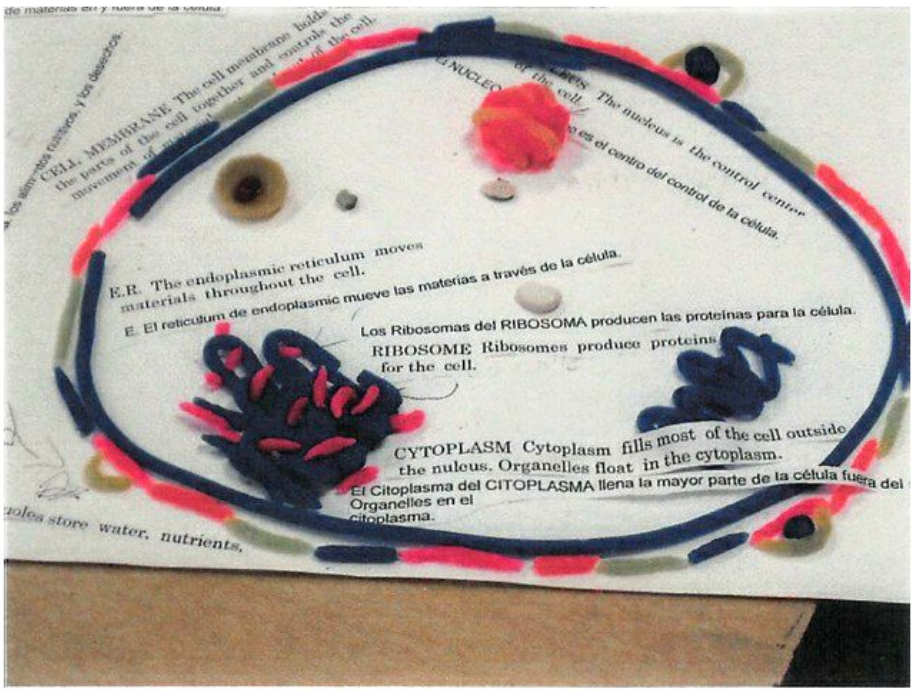
Ms. Lewis tries to incorporate authentic activities and assessments into her classroom assessment practices. To help her students learn the parts of a cell, she had students build models that include various cell parts and descriptions of their corresponding functions. This photograph depicts the work of a CLD student who labeled her animal cell model in both her native language and English.

In a reflection about this activity, Ms. Lewis wrote:

> I have taught this science lesson for 3 years, and this is the first year that I had students make a model of the cell. Usually, we cover the lesson and do some worksheets. I think the model representation helped [CLD and other students] to remember the parts of the cell. We also viewed a video on cells this year, so students could visually see movement of live cells as well as different cell types and structures. I feel that I am growing professionally because I am now incorporating language support into my lessons, and I am focusing more on the needs and learning styles [preferences] of all of my students. The cell model offers an alternative form for assessing students.

Teachers such as Ms. Lewis who adapt and modify lessons to increase student engagement often have to "step out on a limb." After trying activities they have never previously used, effective teachers reflect on ways in which the lessons and related assessments succeeded and/or require further refinement.

Sheila Lewis



Mr. Jin: Do you all agree?
Class: Yes!
Mr. Jin: What do you think was the main setting for most of the book?
Class: The farm.
Mr. Jin: Let's see if the farm is among our answers. (He reveals a picture of a school.)

Class: No, that's a school.
Mr. Jin: (Reveals the next picture of a market.)
Class: No!
Kenji: (laughing) That's where Wilbur was gonna end up!
Mr. Jin (impressed with Kenji's inferential thinking but keeping the class on track): If we know for sure that the school and the market were not the main setting, what can we guess about the last choice?
Class: It's a farm.
Mr. Jin: Yes, because we knew the answer without looking, it should be a farm. Let's look. (Reveals the third picture.)
Class: It's a farm!
Mr. Jin: What if our last choice was a picture or word we didn't recognize (he replaces the farm with a word written in Chinese), but we knew the other two answers were wrong? Would this be a good guess?
Sara: Yes, I bet that says *farm*!
Mr. Jin: If you guessed this was the right answer because you knew the other two answers were wrong, that would be a good guess. And you are right . . . it does say *farm*!

Students are not born savvy test takers. They develop testing competence through ongoing attention to characteristics of question formats they encounter. It is important for students to understand that test taking, just like playing videogames or basketball, requires a set of skills and involves more than subject knowledge—it also requires heightened awareness and practice. A teacher might introduce approaches to multiple-choice testing, for example, at very early levels by using strategies such as those demonstrated by Mr. Jin in the previous scenario. Students who have been exposed early in their education to mediated examples of test-taking strategies in formats that continually adapt to their skills and curricula will, by later years, be able to employ these strategies independently across test-taking contexts.

Teacher-made tests can complement all other forms of assessment, but the development of classroom tests that are appropriate for CLD students requires the careful consideration of several factors. The content tested should, of course, reflect what has been taught and should be probed in the manner best suited for students' demonstration of knowledge. Task analysis skills should be separated into their component parts so that mastery of subskills can be determined. Factual or memorized material can be assessed via formats that have pictures or mastered vocabulary presented in a familiar test design (e.g., matching, multiple choice). The correct answer should be easy to distinguish from incorrect answers, given an understanding of the concepts being measured. Vague or ambiguous prompts are essentially meaningless and sometimes punitive because they tell us only about a student's language and testing finesse rather than the student's content-area comprehension. Assessment in Action 6.1 provides additional guidelines for creating effective prompts/tests.

Although "objective" tests might seem less complicated for CLD students, these learners may actually find it easier to tackle questions that require synthesis, explanation, or analysis through short-answer essays if they are supported with access to graphic organizers and bilingual dictionaries (as applicable). When teachers grade the essays of CLD students, they may choose to focus solely on content rather than incorporating literacy criteria. Alternatively, teachers can provide separate scores for each skill area.

Teaching Tips:

Additional tips for developing teacher-made tests (Educational Testing Service, 2003; Missouri National Education Association, 2011; Salend, 2005) include the following:

- Identify the purpose of the test.
- Determine what type of test would be most appropriate based on the material, student variables, and what you want to measure.
- Control the language level of the test unless that is the curricular area being assessed. Avoid ambiguous or vague prompts. Linguistically complex forms (e.g., unless, although), clausal constructions, and negatives often lead to misinterpretation of the question.
- Keep questions short and specific to lessen the impact that differences in reading speed and fluency have on indices of content learning.
- Allow students some choice in selecting the questions they will answer or demonstrating their knowledge/skills (e.g., options for essay questions, choices of the structure/organization of the response).
- Include questions that reflect varying degrees of complex thought.
- Consider the element of time when developing a test. Inadequate time or time pressure injects several biasing elements into the testing situation that detract from a teacher's ability to distinguish results based on knowledge from those resulting from testing conditions.

Educators who develop effective teacher-made tests remember that it is essential to give students mediated opportunities to work with these formats so they are better equipped to interpret them in higher-stakes testing situations. Many test-taking skills can be learned while applying similar skills during instruction. For instance, the skills of isolating information, synthesizing, and summarizing that frequently are needed to succeed on tests are best developed during daily instruction. The more students practice these skills in academic contexts, the better prepared they will be for actual tests.

The tips provided in Figure 6.5 offer educators guidance for teaching students how to strategically approach test formats such as multiple-choice, matching, true/false, sentence completion, and essay questions. When sharing these tips with CLD students, however, teachers need to incorporate appropriate examples and scaffolding, depending on the academic and language proficiency levels of their students.

Point-in-Time Assessments *Point-in-time assessments* are those quizzes or tests that a teacher employs to gather immediate quantitative feedback about student learning. Often, but not always, such assessments involve the measurement of skills that are acquired hierarchically. Some skills in mathematics, for instance, are acquired in this way. For example, it is important to check the ability of a given student to add single digits before moving on to double digits and regrouping. Spelling tests and vocabulary quizzes are also among the more common point-in-time classroom assessments.

Many teachers who use ongoing assessments such as portfolios or projects also find value in regular quizzes to check for understanding. Assessments that are capable of measuring incremental progress are especially valuable for CLD students. The teacher can subsequently revise instruction or implement

assessment FREEZE FRAME 6.3

Point-in-time assessments are those quizzes or tests that a teacher employs to gather immediate quantitative feedback about student learning.

Figure 6.5 Test-Taking Tips for Students

Testing Tips
Multiple Choice • Read the question and think of the answer before reading the response options. • Eliminate choices that are obviously incorrect or unrelated to the content. • Carefully analyze and choose from among the remaining options. • Look for grammatical clues. • If within the first few attempts you are unable to determine the answer, skip the question and return to it later.
Matching • Make sure you know the rules and understand the directions well (e.g., whether items can be used more than once). • Read the first item in column one and then all possible matches before answering. • First answer items that appear less difficult; skip (and note) difficult items to reconsider when there are fewer possible answers remaining (if one answer per item). • As you proceed, mark out or highlight choices that have been used to focus your attention on responses remaining for review.
True or False • Words that qualify statements (such as *rarely, sometimes, most,* and *usually*) are more likely associated with correct answers than words that make the statement 100% true or false (such as *always, never,* and *every*). • Read each item carefully; mark it false if any part of it is not correct or true. • Highlight prefixes and negative words, and consider their power to change meaning.
Sentence Completion • To help determine the answers, convert these items into questions. • Pay attention to grammatical clues as well as length or number of blanks to identify targeted responses.
Essay • Highlight key words related to directions (e.g., *explain, compare, describe*). • Read the question, note important points to address, and outline your response before beginning to write. • Rephrase the question as the first sentence of the answer, detail your response accordingly with transitions between ideas, and summarize main points in your closing statement(s). • If you are unable to complete an item fully, note its key points and create an outline. • Proofread your response for legibility, spelling, grammar, and style.

Source: Based on Salend, S. J. (2005). Creating inclusive class- rooms: Effective and reflective practices for all students (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

interventions at the most opportune time rather than waiting until the student is significantly behind.

More frequent, short tests over specific content can benefit students who struggle to remember vast quantities of information (Salend, 2009a). In addition, providing frequent quizzes requires students to consistently recall information (Paul, 2015). Paul accentuates the importance of this process, explaining that retrieval practice alters our memories, as our brains elaborate and enforce connections that likely will be needed in the future. Such retrieval practice boosts students' retention of the material and supports subsequent recall. The importance of later explaining and discussing the correct answers with students cannot be overemphasized (Paul, 2015).

Students also need supported to develop metacognitive skills related to their study practices. In fact, some teachers regularly build in opportunities after tests/

ASSESSMENT IN ACTION 6.1

CREATING PROMPTS FOR TEACHER-MADE TESTS

The following guidelines ensure that teacher-made tests are accommodative:

1. When creating questions with multiple choice answers, be mindful of students with varying linguistic skills. Carefully design prompts and foils to avoid creating undue advantages or disadvantages for students. For example, although some students may legitimately know the answers to the following fill-in-the-blank questions, others who are not sufficiently familiar with the content material might be cued by grammar structures that indicate the correct answers.
   i. _____ eat a variety of vegetation, including tree bark.
      a. Moose
      b. Walrus
      c. Penguin
      d. Arctic wolf
   ii. A person who explores caves is called a _____.
      a. entomologist
      b. ethnographer
      c. agronomist
      d. spelunker
2. Consider the range of responses that may be elicited from items. For example, "Tyrannosaurus rex was a _____." (Possible responses include dinosaur, meat-eater, GoBot, etc.). Determine whether to accept all logical responses or revise the prompt to probe the targeted content more specifically. For instance, this item can be rewritten, "Tyrannosaurus rex ate only _____."
3. Avoid using words such as *always, never, all,* and *none* when designing multiple-choice assessments to gather information about content knowledge. These words tend to favor students with greater linguistic experience.
4. Be mindful of the potential for cultural/regional bias in assessments. Depending on the prompt, descriptors such as "Arctic" in the term "Arctic Wolf" might give undue advantage to students familiar with the region's climate, vegetation, and native animals.
5. In many instances, it is best to have students describe the topic/concept in their own words or create a visual (with labels, as needed) to share their understanding of the concept.

ACCOMMODATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES 6.2

On a sentence completion test with picture cues of a cookie, spoon, apple, and cup, Adan circled the cookie as the best response to: "I eat beans with a(n) _____." It seems clear to Mr. Rossi that Adan is either unable to read or did not adequately comprehend the prompt, but he's not sure which. Mr. Rossi hoped this format would give him insights into this student's skills but realizes he won't know much more about Adan's learning if he simply marks the test item wrong. He reads the item again. Perhaps the problem is the preposition *with.* Mr. Rossi had not thought of it when he created the test, but the question could be interpreted as meaning what you eat *along with* your beans, rather than what you use to eat beans. Nevertheless, he thought, it is possible that Adan just couldn't read or understand the words. Mr. Rossi calls Adan to his desk and asks him to read the response to the item aloud. Adan smiles, "I eat beans with a tortilla."

In this case, cultural factors had contributed to Adan's "incorrect" answer. In his family, a tortilla (rather than a spoon or fork) is used to scoop beans from the plate. Given the images provided, Adan's selection of the cookie/tortilla now made perfect sense. Mr. Rossi knows that this student did, in fact, correctly demonstrate the skill being assessed. Based on this experience, Mr. Rossi plans to modify the prompt before using it again. He also is validated about his pedagogical decision to ask students to explain their answers if something seems amiss. ■

SNAPSHOT from *CLASSROOM PRACTICE* **6.2**

In her 3rd-grade classroom, Ms. Farrell uses point-in-time vocabulary quizzes to measure the level of student understanding. To support students' ability to fully demonstrate their knowledge, she provides the translated vocabulary term and asks that the students draw a picture and use the word in a sentence.

Karen Farrell

Ms. Sayles, an 8th-grade teacher, uses an activity called "My Learning in a Box" to ascertain what students have gained from the latest chapter in the book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. During the activity, students draw visuals in each of the six boxes to summarize their learning and then write the theme of the specific chapter. With this information, she is able to determine the degree to which her students understood the essential message of the text and their levels of readiness for proceeding to the next chapter.

Tyherah Sayles

quizzes for students to evaluate what studying practices were most or least effective for them. They also ask students to consider modifications to their studying and commit to trying one or more new strategies the next time they study for an assessment (Lovett, 2013; Millis, 2016).

Curriculum-Based Measurement Another approach to measuring the incremental progress of learners is *curriculum-based measurement* (CBM). Like criterion-referenced tests (which are discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter), teacher-made tests, and point-in-time assessments, CBMs are designed to measure the acquisition of curricular skills directly. Although each of these types of assessment is a form of broader curriculum-based assessment, there are some significant distinctions among them.

To design criterion-referenced and teacher-made tests, long-range objectives are broken down into skills and subskills that are taught and measured sequentially

throughout the year. Although it stands to reason that mastery of these distinct hierarchical components will inevitably result in broader core-area knowledge, this cannot always be assumed. For example, a student might be able to demonstrate mastery of addition with and without regrouping during those respective lessons but perform poorly when required to apply those same processes in more global assessments (or when problems requiring these separate processes are presented together) (Fuchs, 2004). Vanderheyden (2005) contrasts this model of *mastery measurement* with *general outcome measurement*.

CBMs are best characterized as general outcome measurements. Instead of measuring the mastery of incremental steps to an academic goal, CBMs repeatedly sample global skills from which a growing mastery of subskills can be inferred. This is similar in principle to what is sometimes referred to as informal differentiated assessment but differs in that CBMs can be standardized in their administration for an entire class or group.

In a process described by Hosp and Hosp (2003), a teacher using curriculum-based measurement first identifies academic goals and objectives the student is expected to master over the course of the school year or semester. The teacher then uses these outcomes to develop minitests called CBM probes, which can be administered at regular intervals throughout the year. CBM probes gauge student progress toward the terminal goal. An advantage to such probes is that teachers can create graphic representations of the data that are easy to maintain and are comprehensible to parents. Using our math example, CBM probes might comprise 25 items that draw on a range of skills expected to be mastered during the year (e.g., one, two, and three place-value addition and subtraction, with and without regrouping). Student progress with subskills and holistic applications will be demonstrated by an increase in the number of correct items or correct steps per item.

A number of studies indicate that CBMs demonstrate good reliability and validity as measures of ongoing student learning (Hosp, Hosp, & Howell 2016; Christ, White, Ardoin, & Eckert, 2013). CBMs also tend to be quality indicators of student performance on certain high-stakes reading assessments (McGlinchey & Hixson, 2004). Additional research is needed, however, in areas related to CLD learners and the contexts of their instruction. It seems reasonable, for example, that CLD students learning to read in their primary language will demonstrate a different slope of skill mastery than those who receive either highly accommodated or essentially unaccommodated instruction that is delivered only in English. CBMs can also be used to determine when students schooled in their first language (L1) have developed sufficient native language skills to support the transition to English academic instruction, and to monitor the progress of CLD students on reintegration or designation into grade-level education classrooms (Harper-Young, 2018).

Because CBMs provide consistent curriculum-based feedback on student progress, these assessments are useful to classroom teachers as they determine the effectiveness of their curriculum-based instructional accommodations for CLD students. Teachers who reflect on and self-monitor their use of CBMs tend to demonstrate a noticeably broader range of instructional modifications than those who do not self-monitor or those who do not use CBMs. Self-monitoring of CBM use has also been correlated with significantly greater student progress (Neuenschwander, Röthlisberger, Cimeli, & Roebers, 2012).

assessment FREEZE FRAME 6.4

Instead of measuring the mastery of incremental steps to an academic goal, CBMs repeatedly sample global skills from which a growing mastery of subskills can be inferred.

Self-Assessment In most classrooms, teachers continue to be primarily responsible for rating and evaluating student work. Traditional grading systems are supported for a variety of reasons, which include simple formats for informing parents and the presumed capacity to motivate students. Grade-oriented learning environments, however, can be detrimental to student learning if the grades are considered as the ultimate goal. When grades are not viewed as another means of finding what students are capable of doing, then we risk students seeing themselves in a particular category of grades (e.g., "I'm a C student."), at which point it tends to be difficult for them to envision a different reality. In grade-oriented classrooms, less attention is typically paid to the process, or construction, of learning than to the result (the quality of which is generally determined by someone other than the learner). For many CLD students, such practices reinforce an external locus of control and further reduce their sense of self-efficacy in learning.

The promise of *self-assessment* extends well beyond the ability to provide information about achievement. Through self-assessment, students are guided to reach deeper levels of personal thinking and learning. The goal for students is to develop metacognitive skills, which enable them to be reflective about their own thinking, and to approach learning with a growth mindset (Zubrzycki, 2015).

Self-evaluation systems engage students in their learning and foster relationships with teachers as mentors and guides rather than as omnipotent evaluators. In our efforts to promote self-assessment in the classroom, it is important to help students gain a clear and precise understanding of the learning objectives and outcomes. Expectations might be explained in the form of rubrics with examples, delineation of specific skills, discussion of criteria, or the ideal of a real-world application. Although it is always important for students to understand how they will be assessed, there is significant data suggesting that practicing self-assessment according to such criteria leads to improved academic learning and performance (Dearnley & Meddings, 2007).

Self-assessment charts or graphs can function in a variety of ways depending on grade level and content. Simple formats, such as the one depicted in Figure 6.6, might involve listing tasks, skill competencies, or knowledge areas along one axis and descriptors of comfort or success along the other. These descriptors might correlate directly with objective indices of mastery, such as percentage correct in multiplication tables (ones, twos, threes, etc.), qualitative terminology (e.g., lost, uncomfortable, getting it, comfortable, super), or pictorial representations (e.g., sad, confused, curious, or happy faces; red, yellow, or green stoplights) (Wiliam, 2004). Students are taught to plot and recognize their own progress as they assess themselves along targeted parameters of learning. As with other forms of assessment, it is important to emphasize what has been accomplished and to promote the mutual discussion of ways to address what has not. Innovative educators might also elect to model self-assessment of their own learning of curricular material or a recently undertaken hobby.

Technology can be a great aid for students as they focus on their growth. Technology initiatives and access to computers and tablets have provided teachers with additional means to tailor electronic learning programs according to students' levels and needs. Programs that incorporate data tracking and visual graphs allow students to see how their performance has changed over the course of time. When students complete additional types of assessment, the results can be uploaded on the same devices to provide learners with a cumulative picture of their own performance. Having continuous access to data and associated performance tasks

Figure 6.6 Assessment Artifact: Self-Assessment Rubric

Literature Circle Presentation Preparation
Self-Assessment Rubric

Student Name:
Title of Book:

Presentation Preparation Activities	**Please circle the most appropriate response to each statement.** **1 = Never 4 = Frequently** **2 = Rarely 5 = Always** **3 = Sometimes**				
1. I came to group meetings prepared (on time and ready to make an honest effort to understand the material).	1	2	3	4	5
2. I willingly read from the book when it was my turn.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I actively participated in discussions.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I listened attentively while members shared thoughts.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I respected the ideas and opinions of other members.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I helped my group discuss the general questions.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I helped discuss the questions specific to our book.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I identified at least one question that needed to be addressed.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I helped define presentation responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I prepared for my presentation responsibilities (gathered materials, rehearsed part, asked for advice when necessary, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5

With which group members did you work most effectively?

Additional Comments:

ACCOMMODATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES 6.3

Mr. Piña decided to model self-assessment by using his experiences with playing an accordion. He shares with the class that he has always wanted to learn how to play the accordion and that he recently found one at a garage sale. His 5th-grade class is intrigued by the accordion's buttons and bellows but oddly surprised at Mr. Piña's inability to produce anything that sounds like music. Carla volunteers that her uncle plays the accordion, and he agrees to give Mr. Piña lessons.

The students are doubtful that Mr. Piña will learn to play a song by Christmas. He posts a small chart on the wall on which he will plot how he feels each week about his progress (i.e., lost, uncomfortable, getting it, comfortable, or super). The students want to be involved too, so together they develop their own additional rubric to rate his eventual success:

1. No one can recognize the song.
2. A few recognize the song; there are too many errors; it is way too slow or fast.
3. Many recognize the song; there are some errors; it is a little too slow or fast.
4. Nearly everyone recognizes the song and can sing along.

During the first 2 weeks, Mr. Piña's chart shows that he does not feel at all like a learner, but by week three he's moved from *lost* to *uncomfortable* along his own rubric. The class applauds. In October he brings the accordion back into class and demonstrates his learning. The students rate his performance a 2 according to their rubric, and Gaby laughs, "He probably started as a 0 rather than a 1." Mr. Piña feels that he's now *getting it*. By Christmas, his average rubric rating from the class is 3.6, but even so everyone enjoys singing along. Mr. Piña knows this activity afforded his students a fun opportunity to gain experience with self- and peer-assessment (with him as the learner!). ■

promotes ongoing self-reflection among students related to their learning processes and performances.

As one might expect, both teachers and students need targeted support in becoming adept at using self-assessment to advance classroom learning effectively (Brown & Harris, 2014). The format of self-assessment tasks must be developmentally appropriate and geared toward eliciting the kinds of thinking that promote learning and future application of insights gained. Providing opportunities for students to justify their self-evaluation, for example, challenges them to engage in sophisticated thinking about criteria and their own performance (Brown & Harris, 2014). Brown and Harris also make clear that teacher feedback about the results of self-assessments are instrumental to students' growth in their ability to realistically assess their learning efforts.

Technology-Supported Assessment Today technology drives our society. In addition to technological applications for everything from household management to entertainment and citizenship (news, consumerism, voting), technology is also uniquely suited to meet some of the critical needs of CLD learners. Carefully chosen technologies can facilitate the CLD student's comprehension and demonstration of content-area learning by providing:

1. Access to native language supports or resources that enhance student comprehension
2. Contextual supports such as pictures, videos, and audio clips, as well as more authentic learning opportunities through simulations and so forth

3. One-on-one instruction that provides immediate feedback at the student's learning level
4. Programmed adjustment of content and complexity that adapts to student responses, scaffolds new knowledge, and engenders a sense of success
5. Added dimensions to cooperative and project-based learning activities, including access to and communication with outside resources
6. Opportunities to access and enhance higher-order thinking skills as the student connects new and prior learning through self-directed inquiry

Technological applications can augment our repertoire of performance and project-based assessments, but they also offer a range of modifications to more traditional tests that were not previously possible or practical for the typical teacher. Some programs allow teachers or students to choose the assessment design, modifications, and response format that is most likely to yield valid information about students' abilities in content areas. Options may include audio presentation, verbal or written response, L1 translation, use of bilingual online dictionaries, extended time, and so forth. For many teachers, these modifications are actually easier to provide via technology than through adaptations, materials, or personnel currently available to them on site.

A strength of *technology-supported assessments* is that they can be designed (or purchased with the design) to respond dynamically to the performance patterns of a single student. For example, computer-assisted tests (CATs) are now available to differentially assess students who are performing above or below assigned grade level on their mastery of targeted knowledge and skills. These assessments are structured so that items answered correctly are followed by more complex or difficult prompts, whereas those answered in error lead to more simplified branches of the material or content. This reduces the number of unnecessary items and provides generally equivalent data in far less time. If the overall pool of test items is large, students are unlikely to take the same test twice. Therefore, CATs usually can be readministered more frequently than traditional forms of standardized assessment (Van Horn, 2003).

When considering the use of technology-supported assessments, recommendations (Chien, Wu, & Hsu, 2014; Salend, 2005, 2009b) include:

1. Scrutinize items or the structure of assessments for cultural or linguistic bias.
2. Carefully evaluate tools for language demands that may unfairly affect the CLD student's demonstration of knowledge and skills.
3. Consider student familiarity and comfort with technology in general when determining the appropriateness of use.
4. Think about the extent to which the format precludes accommodations (e.g., highlighting) that may be particularly relevant and useful for the CLD student.

The Internet can also provide innovative opportunities for our work with CLD students and families (Kingsley & Tancock, 2014; Salend, 2005) that include, but certainly are not limited to:

- Ongoing assessment formats such as electronic portfolios and interactive journals
- Teacher-made assessments to be used as self-assessments and point-in-time measures (www.funbrain.com; www.quia.com)

SNAPSHOT from *CLASSROOM PRACTICE* **6.3**

In this middle school science classroom, students use textbooks and the Internet as resources to create a PowerPoint on the Precambrian era. The students were provided a rubric listing the requirements that were expected within their presentations.

- Test-taking resources, practice tests, or computer-assisted tests (www.edutest.com; www.homeroom.com)
- Resources for creating, designing, and interpreting surveys
- Online web pages to inform parents and students about assignments, deadlines, and instructional goals
- Electronic mail to inform parents of grades, absences, concerns, celebrations, and accomplishments. (*Note:* These should be scrutinized for cross-cultural sensitivity and cross-linguistic comprehensibility.)

When use of the Internet is involved in any aspect of instruction or assessment, responsible teachers address the need for students to understand issues of digital citizenship, which include plagiarism, acceptable access, and general matters of e-conduct.

Formal Formative Assessment

Formal assessments encompass more than the periodic high-stakes assessments that tend to dominate conversations in staff meetings and lounges. Like informal assessments, formal assessments are tools that teachers can use effectively to gather data about instruction and learning in their classrooms. This data can be used to diagnose learning needs, monitor progress, and provide students and families with timely feedback (Research for Better Teaching, 2016).

Teachers may consider their high-stakes "look-alike" tests as formal formative assessments, but many districts identify formal formative assessments as the centrally developed or adopted tools used as a barometer of student learning across settings such as classes, schools, or districts. Such assessments include (a) norm-referenced or criterion-referenced tests designed for (or permitting) periodic update, (b) formal assessments that accompany a standardized program of instruction (e.g., Scholastic Reading Inventory [SRI]), (c) assessments that are part of district curricular units, and (d) some assessments that are facilitated by computer (e.g., Advantage Learning, FastBridge Learning: Curriculum Based Measurements, Measures of Academic Progress [MAP], Standardized Testing and Reporting [STAR]).

Formal Formative Assessments as Norm-Referenced and Criterion-Referenced Tests This section of the chapter discusses those formal formative assessments that are specifically applicable to classroom teachers of CLD students. *Norm-referenced tests* and *criterion-referenced tests* are each useful as formal formative assessments. The differences between these two kinds of tests largely reflect their purposes and the way resulting scores are interpreted (Boehm, 1973; Bond, 1996; Brown, 2014). Norm-referenced assessments are designed and used to measure differences among students. Items mastered or failed by a majority are discarded in favor of those deemed most likely to distinguish among test takers. Often this results in a test with fewer, more heavily weighted items per skill. On the other hand, criterion-referenced tests provide information on the acquisition or demonstration of selected components and target instructional skills among students *without* regard to the relationship between one student's performance and the achievement of others.

In general, reliance on tests that sample skills through a limited number of items is less informative to our teaching than is the use of assessments that include multiple opportunities to probe or elicit demonstration of content-area knowledge. If the primary purpose of formative assessment is to enlighten our understanding of how well a student is learning (and how well the teacher is teaching) the targeted material, there may be particular merit in using criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced assessments of content-area learning. Regardless of the type used, the assessment should measure what we intend to measure and provide reliable information that is useful. Well-designed criterion-referenced tests not only provide formal formative information about student mastery of specified skills but also give us insight into the levels of prerequisite knowledge necessary to perform the tasks.

assessment FREEZE FRAME 6.5

In general, reliance on tests that sample skills through a limited number of items is less informative to our teaching than is the use of assessments that include multiple opportunities to probe or elicit demonstration of content-area knowledge.

Commercially Produced Assessments The growing population of CLD students in public schools has resulted in an expanding market for assessment tools that aid our understanding of these students and enhance our ability to assess their learning. Marketed tests or *commercially produced assessments* can be very attractive because the majority offer formative numerical indices of student skills, and some are developed for use in other languages. A sole reliance on such tests in the belief that they allow us to easily identify and address discrete areas of student need can result, however, in inappropriate placement and instructional practices for CLD students. Readers are cautioned to review discussions in Chapter 5 regarding the validity of any "normed" tests for diverse populations. Used wisely, however, some of these tools can indeed provide auxiliary pieces of information that may augment a school's more authentic and dynamic picture of student progress in content-area learning.

The Snapshot Assessment System (Rangel & Bansberg, 1999) is an example of a marketed tool that can be used to ascertain information about the content-area learning of CLD students. It is designed to assess the student's related knowledge in Spanish or English but can be administered as a formal formative assessment by teachers who speak only English. In roughly 20 minutes, reading, writing, science, and math can be sampled sufficiently to obtain an overview of a student's L1 or L2 knowledge and skills in core academic areas. One reason the Snapshot is popular among classroom teachers is that it does not simply compare CLD students with an artificial norm to derive a statistic that does little to inform instruction. Instead, this

assessment provides tangible evidence of standards-based skills to aid the teacher in developing appropriate instructional plans (see Chapter 3 for additional details).

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) (Good & Kaminski, 2002) is a reading assessment developed to assess K–6 students on the acquisition of literacy skills. The test is designed to measure the National Reading Panel's Five Big Ideas of early literacy: phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The tests are short (1-minute) assessments that assist teachers in monitoring the development of students' reading skills. As with any assessment, using DIBELS with CLD learners has advantages and disadvantages. Benefits of DIBELS include the following:

- The test is given to individual learners, thereby making it a convenient screener for students' literacy skills.
- The test can be administered quickly.
- The assessment can serve as one tool for data-driven decisions about the needs of students.

Potential drawbacks to DIBELS with CLD students include the following:

- The timed part of the test (5–7 minutes per student) is sometimes not enough to create a true picture of a student's needs.
- The resulting scores on the test often simply do not provide enough information for teachers to determine students' skills fully.
- The pictures used within the test can create cultural bias for students from different cultures.
- English learners may inadvertently be counted off for using their understanding of the sounds in their native language, especially during administration of the Initial Sound Fluency (ISF) subtest.
- The Nonsense Words Fluency (NSF) subtest can be very confusing for English learners who are still in the initial stages of language development.
- Inordinate emphasis might be placed on results, given limitations of the assessment (e.g., limited predictive ability of Grade 1 Letter Naming Fluency (LNF), Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF), and Nonsense Words Fluency (NSF) subtests for students' achievement beyond Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) performance [Goffreda & DiPerna, 2010]).

AIMSweb (2000) is an assessment, reporting, and data management system commonly used in response to intervention (RTI) or tiered instruction (see Chapter 7 for additional details about these types of data-informed programming). AIMSweb provides very brief (most are 1 to 4 minutes) assessments of reading, math, spelling, and writing that can be generalized to overall academic performance and used for screening/benchmarking and progress monitoring. English and Spanish versions are available. AIMSweb includes an ELL Profile that supports educators to:

- Identify English learners whose academic issues are broader than simply their level of language proficiency
- Establish expectations and goals for individual learners, based on their profiles
- Consider recommendations for instruction and connections to other academic outcomes

The most current version, aimswebPlus (2017), includes tools to screen for dyslexia and behavior/emotional challenges.

Interpreting Assessment Results In all cases, the usefulness of assessment data hinges on our ability to interpret the results knowledgeably. When teachers are familiar with the formats, implications, and limitations of assessments, they can begin to identify factors in results that lead them to further examine the source of the data or individual student variables before determining success or failure of student learning. Questions to consider include the following:

- Where and how is the content of the assessment represented in the school's curriculum?
- Have the skills and concepts assessed been taught in a comprehensible manner?
- Is there classroom evidence of content learning that contradicts the results of the assessment? If so, why do the discrepancies exist?
- Were sufficient assessment accommodations provided to mediate the linguistic complexity of the assessment?
- How might a student's level of acculturation or task familiarity have affected her or his performance on the assessment?

The answers to these questions should prove extremely informative, especially when combined with knowledge of language acquisition processes and an awareness of the sociocultural contexts of the instruction and assessment being examined. Although necessary for accountability and statistical applications, formal assessments can and should coexist effectively with ongoing informal assessment processes.

SUMMATIVE CONTENT-AREA ASSESSMENT

Summative content-area assessments are designed to measure student understanding following a sustained period of instruction or participation in a series of instructional sequences. Since *summative assessments* are higher-stakes than formative assessments, it is critical to ensure that the assessment aligns with the goals and objectives of instruction. As previously noted, the results we gain from formative assessments inform us of our students' strengths, needs, and gaps so that we can accommodate them strategically and consistently. With such support, we increase the likelihood that students will be able to perform on summative assessments in ways that more accurately reflect their individual potentials.

Summative assessments emphasize the level of student mastery attained and the efficacy of instruction or schooling patterns. From a student perspective, summative assessments are about quantifying performance and determining either grades or sufficient performance to pass to the next level of education or career. From an educator perspective, summative assessments can be used to refine instruction but are more often associated with issues of accountability. From a policy perspective, summative assessments of content-area learning are increasingly about politics, accountability, and rationales for funding decisions.

Informal Summative Assessment: Portfolios as Authentic Assessments

Student assessment portfolios can be used for either formative or summative purposes. As Masters (2013) explains, "When assembled over a period of time, portfolios can provide a valid basis for establishing current levels of achievement and

for monitoring progress over time" (p. 38). Summative portfolios focus on learning outcomes and provide evidence of the range and extent of a student's skills and knowledge in the content areas. According to Davis and Ponnamperuma (2005), portfolio assessment can be organized to include the following stages:

1. Students collect evidence to demonstrate attainment of learning outcomes.
2. Students reflect on learning.
3. Teachers evaluate evidence.
4. Students defend evidence (especially in the cases of struggling or borderline students).
5. Teachers arrive at the assessment decision.

In order for portfolios to best showcase student learning, students and teachers may decide to build a portfolio around a combination of teacher assessments and student self-assessments and products that reflect both the process of learning and final outcomes. This type of portfolio development encourages students to take ownership over their learning, as discussed in Chapter 2. The best competency-based portfolios are developed in this manner and emphasize both the student's self-directedness in skill development and self-assessment and the effectiveness of the teacher's instruction. Because a single item of evidence may be applicable to more than one performance indicator or learning outcome, it is often necessary for the teacher to develop an appropriate cross-referencing system for the student portfolio. In some cases, commentary or a caption may also be needed to explain the relevance of an item of evidence.

Formal Summative Assessment: High-Stakes Tests

Formal summative assessments of content-area learning are increasingly at the heart of school reform and educational funding debates as well as educator accountability arguments. Because the outcomes or results of these assessments have ramifications for the future education, careers, and life paths of students, such assessments are now synonymous with terms such as *high-stakes tests*. Now more than ever, teachers live and breathe the air of high-stakes tests. It permeates their planning, instruction, and relationships with students and their feelings about their careers. In many places, the results of these tests hold stakes that are just as high for teachers as they are for students and schools. This emphasis on scores has actually prompted some teachers to intentionally disregard administration protocol or to directly teach to the test (Goodnough, 1999; "Under pressure," 2010). The more common response, however, is to focus more intensely on skills and drills in preparation for these tests.

Although such a narrow focus of instruction on the content and constructs of the test has some degree of merit, triangulated studies (e.g., Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Volante, 2004) suggest that the possibility of detrimental trade-offs is high, and that such trade-offs often result in reductionist, skills-bound learning; inability of students to demonstrate higher-order thinking; and low student motivation. These effects have been noted by other researchers as well who contest the predictive ability of standardized tests and their power to provide informative data about actual student learning (e.g., Burger & Krueger, 2003).

What, then, can teachers do to promote the success of CLD students on high-stakes tests? First, effective educators recognize the power of both formative and

summative assessments to guide them as they facilitate students' construction of knowledge. Second, these teachers strive to:

1. Align their learning goals with state and local standards
2. Define and describe the desired academic outcomes, so that they are transparent for students
3. Ensure the equitable access of *all* students to educational content and learning opportunities
4. Interpret and respond knowledgeably to student learning behaviors in context (which oftentimes means reevaluating instructional practices)
5. Ensure that students enter testing situations with the tools necessary to reduce their affective filters and maximize their performances (e.g., test-taking strategies and skills, experience with modifications, confidence)

Teachers who make these actions part of their daily practices actively promote the classroom engagement and academic success of CLD students. Students who are thus engaged and successful in their learning are, in turn, increasingly self-motivated and prepared to demonstrate their skills and knowledge on high-stakes tests.

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN CONTENT-AREA ASSESSMENT

Mr. Loucks, a 5th-grade teacher, understands the potential benefits of allowing CLD students to use their native language to demonstrate academic capacities. He reflects on his instructional practices to enhance the writing skills of one particular Spanish-speaking student. (For purposes of anonymity, the student's name has been changed to Enrique.)

The practice of having one of my ELL students occasionally complete his Weekend Write-up in Spanish was a highlight for both him and the class. At the beginning Enrique was not a willing writer. When I asked him to write about his weekend, I'd get maybe two or three sentences at best. As time progressed, I realized that Enrique indeed was a fairly fluent writer in Spanish, his L1. Although at first he was hesitant to write in much detail in Spanish, his writing really blossomed when I allowed him to share his writing with the class. Probably the highlight for Enrique and the class was the time I made an overhead transparency of what he was reading and they could follow along. Not only was this an opportunity for my class to realize that it was indeed a gift to be bilingual, but it also helped them realize that there were things they didn't know—like Spanish. Enrique's credibility in the class skyrocketed when he started sharing and claiming his Spanish language, instead of trying to hide it.

As time went on, Enrique's writing continued to flourish. That isn't to say it was perfect. As you can see [referring to a student writing sample] . . . Enrique didn't believe in punctuation. ☺ This was a continual struggle for him. Once he got writing, he wanted to just write, not punctuate. I know he still struggles with this in 6th grade, but at least he was writing. I'd rather allow him to be fluent in writing his L1 than be so preoccupied with the mechanics that he loses his interest in writing.

Enrique was also allowed to write his State Writing Assessment in Spanish. . . . We had already started our first day of prewriting during the State Assessment when Enrique approached me and wanted to know if he could write in Spanish.

When I asked him why he wanted to do this, he said it was because he could do a better job in Spanish. Our curriculum director called the . . . [State] Department of Education and was told that as long as there was a qualified scorer available, Enrique could write in Spanish. As you might suspect, Enrique got hammered in Conventions and Fluency, but scored well in Ideas and Content, Organization, and fair in Voice and Word Choice.

Mr. Loucks recognized that his accommodative classroom practices were pivotal in the appropriate assessment of this student. Because he had previously allowed Enrique to write in his native language, Mr. Loucks saw the validity of Enrique's request to complete the state writing assessment in Spanish.

Cross-culturally competent teachers such as Mr. Loucks advocate on behalf of CLD students for assessment accommodations that enable these students to best demonstrate their abilities. Teachers and administrators who share an inclusive vision of student learning understand that the purpose of assessment, at all levels, is to inform and guide the instruction of students. This can occur only when the manner and the content of student instruction and assessment are aligned. Many schools and districts unfortunately opt to "prepare" their CLD students for high-stakes tests in English by denying them appropriately accommodated classroom opportunities to learn. Students are not allowed to demonstrate their learning through the native language or through modified instructional techniques and assessments. These *un*accommodative practices significantly compromise not only the education of CLD students but also the ability of teachers to understand and differentially respond to their learning processes.

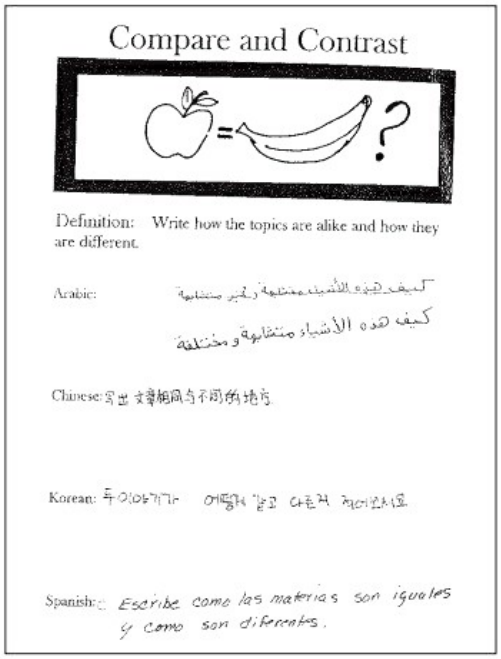
Validity issues arise when linguistic and presentation modifications that were not used during instruction are then used to assess CLD learning on high-stakes tests. For example, most schools and districts that attempt to accommodate students' first language needs either use personnel of varying qualifications to provide written or verbal translation or purchase marketed translations of English-based tests. However, simply translating tests from English to the student's native language does not significantly improve performance unless the student actually received instruction in his or her native language. This concern holds true even for tests (e.g., Supera, Logramos, Aprenda, SABE, Woodcock-Muñoz) that are designed for use with specific CLD populations. If students have not been exposed to the content-area curriculum in their native language or do not possess sufficient literacy skills in the native language, the tests will not yield valid results (Abedi, 2001; Abedi, Lord, & Hoffstetter, 1998; August & Hakuta, 1997; Turkan & Oliveri, 2014).

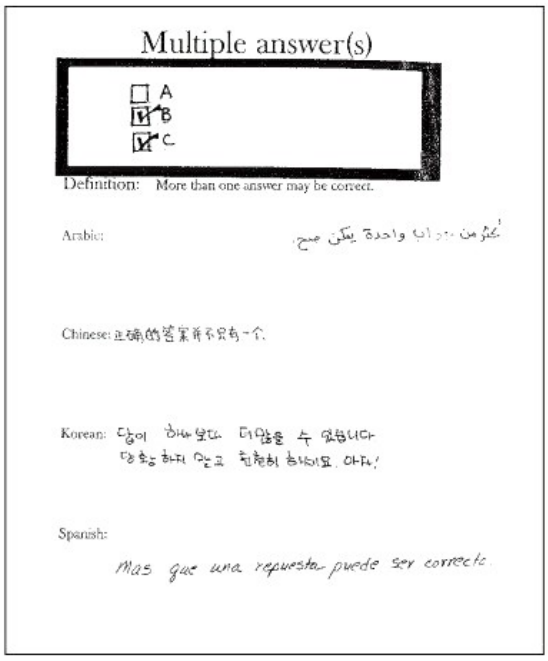
Because a large number of languages spoken by CLD students cannot be supported by existing materials or testing personnel, and because the majority of CLD students in this country receive their academic instruction in English, it becomes more appropriate for many students to be assessed in English, their nondominant language. For others, the decision is systemic rather than individualized. In either case, however, one must thoroughly consider the impact that language may have on a CLD student's capacity to comprehend what is being asked and to demonstrate acquired knowledge by means of language-loaded assessment formats.

assessment FREEZE FRAME 6.6

Cross-culturally competent teachers advocate on behalf of CLD students for assessment accommodations that enable these students to best demonstrate their abilities.

To reduce test anxiety and provide CLD students with appropriate language support, Mr. Wille synthesized the input





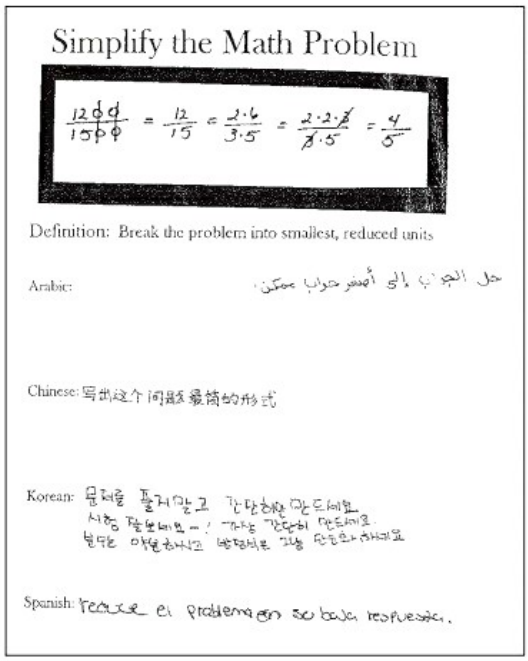


Figure 6.7 Assessment Artifact: Test Vocabulary Handbook

Source: Gale Wille. Reprinted by permission.

of fellow teachers to create a test vocabulary handbook, an excerpt of which is pictured in Figure 6.7. The teachers identified vocabulary terms and phrases frequently found in the instructions of standardized tests. Then they provided an explanation for the testing vocabulary as well as a visual to enhance comprehensibility. The definitions were translated into Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Spanish. This tool enabled teachers within the school system to use consistent testing language as they

prepared students to take standardized assessments. The handbook was beneficial for *all* students because the instructions were simple and precise. The testing language the students used during classroom instruction was the same language they encountered in formal assessment.

BIAS IN CLASSROOM-BASED CONTENT-AREA ASSESSMENTS

As she reviewed her students' scores on a district math assessment, a Kansas teacher was mystified about why so many of her CLD students did poorly on a particular item. The question involved having the students calculate how many checkerboards would be needed for a given number of students to play checkers. Students were required to show their work in mathematical and pictorial form. To her surprise, the teacher noted that most of the CLD students depicted three to four students at a game. Although their related calculations were correct, the students' answers were graded as incorrect. According to the teacher:

> Even though this test question was about something as insignificant as checkers, it served to separate the "haves" from the "have-nots" and the "knows" from the "know-nots," but not in the area of math. To me this is just a tiny example of how entire groups of people can be held back, be it inadvertently or intentionally.

Source: LuAnna Peck. Reprinted by permission.

As this example demonstrates, test items that require cultural knowledge as well as content-area knowledge may hinder appropriate interpretation of assessment results. This scenario also illustrates that bias is not always easy to recognize. The absolute certainty with which we contend that our views and experiences are universal becomes especially problematic when we consider issues of assessment.

Although it is a recognized concern that tests designed for large groups of students must be scrutinized in terms of their appropriateness for all students, similar biases may also exist in teacher-made tests. In the following excerpt, Principal Richard Wirtz poses questions as he reflects on his role as an assessment leader:

> When assessments are designed to test content or prior knowledge, are they free from cultural bias? Do I plan staff development that considers assessment training? Are examples of test items shared that display test bias and some that don't? Do I outline the requirements that make up quality test items . . . guidelines . . . if you will? Are teachers expected to reflect on questions they should ask themselves before attempting to write test items that display cognitive skills without compromising the background of the student?

Source: Principal Richard Wirtz. Reprinted by permission.

These are excellent questions. Effective leaders involve staff in ongoing professional development, discussion, and reflection related to assessment. They directly address and share examples of unwitting bias in tests. They recommend guiding questions for teachers to consider as they work to reduce bias in their assessments. It is difficult to produce test items and tasks that are equally free of bias for all students in today's diverse classrooms. However, our objective in all cases is to identify and rectify, to the greatest extent possible, controllable elements of bias in our assessment tools and procedures.

In reality, a potential for bias exists in all forms of assessment. In some classes, particular students may be perceived as more capable or diligent based on factors such as race, language proficiency, dialect, affiliations, or the teacher's previous experience with similar or related students. Teachers may inadvertently provide differing amounts of support and feedback during ongoing assessments such as portfolios, or allow unrelated opinions or political concerns to influence their subjective ratings of student work. Differences in language, past experiences (personal and educational), sociocultural precepts, and approaches to novel tasks may continue to obstruct the access of CLD students to the learning goals of traditionally designed projects or multimodal activities (Cramer & Bennett, 2015). Although these types of issues can cloud or corrupt the validity of nonstandardized assessments, the capacity of such assessments to influence student learning positively and contribute significantly to what we know about how students learn compels us to improve our control of bias rather than diminish the role of these valuable tools.

The following questions may help educators identify bias within a variety of assessment tools and approaches (Hamayan & Damico, 1991; Ovando & Combs, 2018):

1. Is the content of the assessment linked to known student experiences?
2. Does the assessment take into account the impact of prior school experiences?
3. Have cultural values and practices (e.g., cooperation versus competition, role of time) been considered for their impact on student responses?
4. Is the task appropriate to the developmental level(s) of the students?
5. Have the language demands of the task been adjusted for the language proficiency level(s) of the students?
6. What are the prerequisite skills or knowledge assumed by the task?
   - Are they related to the target being measured?
   - If not, are they known (not assumed) to be familiar to the students?
7. Are the criteria for responses or goal attainment clearly defined?
8. Are assessment accommodations employed during assessment consistent with those used during content-area instruction?
9. Has the assessment process and product been reviewed by others for sources of potential bias?
10. How has rater and inter-rater reliability been addressed (e.g., "blind" grading and exchanges)?

Some teachers who have begun to embrace the promise of better assessment practices now ask, "Will an increase in authenticity and reduction of bias in assessments result in higher demonstrated achievement of CLD students?" The answer is, "Not necessarily . . . but they certainly can." Because the goal of content-area assessment is to measure academic learning, effective assessment practices simply provide a clearer picture of instructional efficacy with a given student or group. Students who are not receiving accommodative instruction that fosters engaged participation in the curriculum will continue to perform poorly. If bias and inequity are not recognized at the instructional level, even the least biased assessments will yield inherently biased results.

assessment FREEZE FRAME 6.7

If bias and inequity are not recognized at the instructional level, even the least biased assessments will yield inherently biased results.

USING CONTENT-BASED ASSESSMENT INFORMATION TO INFORM INSTRUCTION

At this point, teachers may be thinking, "Strategies for authentic assessment are all well and good, but what about the grade? How do I determine a grade for CLD students' content-area learning?" This question is one of the most common asked by educators who must document a letter or percentage grade for all students in the classroom. Ultimately, teachers are responsible for reporting whether a student has met the goals set by the curriculum and guiding standards.

Our education system has a history of limiting teachers' views of grading and hindering the potential of the reported results to enhance the student's motivation to engage, aspire, and take risks during learning endeavors. So much is determined by policies that reflect the unquestioned values, norms, and traditions that have been part of school systems for decades. Grading systems were decided long before changing demographics and diversity in classrooms became the norm rather than the exception. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to address the many complexities of fairness issues and the grading policies of school districts across the United States. Instead, the focus of this section is on the need to (1) assess the extent to which students achieved the intended objectives of the lesson/unit/class, and (2) document progress in student motivation, engagement, thinking processes, and social collaboration toward academic achievement and linguistic development.

Effective teachers use assessment results to support future learning and to inform them about appropriate accommodations for the student population served. They move beyond fixating on a grade and the grading system—a system that conveys limited (superficial versus deep) information about the knowledge and skills that were learned and the degree to which they were learned. Rather, reflective teachers are concerned with *understanding* in assessment. Such teachers strive to determine how well students were able to:

- Construct meaning from the unknown
- Incorporate new content and concepts into their preexisting foundations of knowledge
- Build new skills that transcend the content areas
- Collaborate with diverse peers to share, learn, and articulate new information

At first glance, this alternative perspective on appropriate postinstructional assessment may appear to rely on a comparatively subjective foundation. However, this perspective does not eliminate the need to plan for the assignment of a less subjective grade that can be shared with parents and policymakers. Rather, it asks that educators consider ways to provide multiple and varied opportunities for CLD students to enhance their linguistic, academic, cognitive, and sociocultural skills and knowledge *before* using the norms of the grade level to assign a permanent grade. Only through authentic learning experiences and activities, opportunities for student practice, and ongoing process-focused assessments can a teacher appropriately scaffold instruction and provide timely feedback to enhance the product focus of grade-level-appropriate achievement and learning.

As educators embark on the journey toward equitable decisions about grading and the CLD student, they consider the multitude of variables concerning the learner's growth and achievement that might be shared with students, parents, future teachers, and administrators. They also determine the subset of variables they will

use to make decisions about the student's grade. The following questions can guide a teacher's decisions about what to include in the final grade for a lesson or unit:

- What are the objectives of this lesson or unit regarding both knowledge (content/concepts) and language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) skills?
- Will percentage or symbol grades be given to indicate achievement of the selected objectives?
- What are the purposes of the grades or observations that will be recorded?
- In what ways will opportunities for practice and feedback (to assess progress and growth incrementally) be provided?
- Which activities will be assigned a grade for product assessment, and which activities will be used as process assessments to ensure ongoing progress?
- Will there be a homework grade?
- Will there be a cooperative learning grade?
- What checklists, rubrics, or anecdotal notes will be used to document progress and achievement?
- What weight will be given to each piece of the final reported achievement score?

The following additional questions can guide decisions about a student's final grade for the instructional term or year:

- What information will be used to calculate the final grade?
- Will the grade be an absolute measure of achievement?
- Will the grade be reflective of linguistic, academic, cognitive, and sociocultural aspects of learning and academic performance?
- Will some aspects of the practice and application be weighted more than others?
- What roles will attitude, motivation, and cooperation play in the final grade?

Among classroom teachers of CLD students, the assignment of final grades should reflect thorough consideration of these and related questions. Above all, teachers should reflect on whether the assessments used, and grades assigned, provide a multifaceted picture of the potential that CLD students are capable of demonstrating.

PROGRAMMING-RELATED ISSUES: CONTENT-AREA ASSESSMENT

Issues of placement and programming for English learners are topics beyond the scope of this text. Nonetheless, the results of assessing content-area skills and knowledge can aid decision making associated with these issues. The following discussion highlights grade-level issues of content-area assessment that are relevant to the identification, placement, monitoring, and exit of CLD students. This discussion is by no means exhaustive but provides a synopsis of issues that should be considered.

Identification

Ideally, the identification of CLD students for differential instruction is not based solely on a single measure or limited sampling of literacy domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Within each of these domains are innumerable factors that render otherwise identical scores fundamentally nonequivalent. Many

protocols for identifying CLD students who are not yet proficient in English gather little, if any, information about content-area knowledge and skills. However, the determination of whether students have a history of prior L1 education or have been exposed to cognitively rich experiences and conversations in L2 is essential to appropriate placement.

Placement

Creative and individualized placement may be needed for CLD students who would benefit in many ways from a newcomer program but who have skills that would not be capitalized on in this environment. Unfortunately, it is common to discover CLD students placed, for example, in remedial math despite mastery of calculus in a prior country or setting. Teachers are encouraged to discover the facets of each student's learning background that expose strengths or resources that can be drawn on in accommodative classrooms.

Monitoring

Ongoing and varied formative assessments provide teachers with (a) information needed to monitor and document student progress, (b) input for appropriate instructional modifications, (c) indicators that a student may need enhanced levels of differential support, and (d) evidence of a student's readiness for redesignation. Unless teachers monitor to maintain a comprehensible level of rigor in their instruction, students may become so accustomed to added support that they doubt their abilities to be successful on their own. Therefore, attention to student empowerment and confidence are encouraged at all times but become especially important as readiness for exit approaches.

Exit

Student performance on content-area assignments and assessments are part of the body of evidence necessary to consider a student's redesignation from differential programming designed to support English language acquisition. Teachers are encouraged to review multiple sources of data when making recommendations about the best instructional situation for a CLD student. When educators monitor student learning closely in various contexts, it is generally apparent when a CLD student is ready to be exited from a program. Although subjective input from teachers can be extremely valuable to the process, sometimes teachers are either inclined to underestimate student readiness or desire to shield students from the accommodated experience. Such resistance to redesignation without sufficient (especially data-driven) rationales can inhibit educational opportunities and growth potentials among CLD students.

SUMMARY

This chapter explored the purposes and formats of multiple types of assessments teachers use to gauge CLD students' content-area learning. At the core of the discussion was the need for us to gain a holistic understanding of the knowledge and skills students possess after their engagement in accommodative, standards-based instruction. Teachers have the most control over the strategies they use to support all students to attain the content and language objectives of each lesson. Our caring, responsive interactions with students during the

course of instruction and assessment lie at the heart of gathering data that most authentically reflects their current capacities.

Formative content-area assessment makes it possible for teachers to gather data about students' sense-making processes and levels of understanding while learning is still in progress. Informal assessments of this type are tied to teachers' daily instructional practices. Sources of information include inquiry-based learning, observation, structured authentic assessments, teacher-made tests, point-in-time assessments, curriculum-based measurement, student self-assessment, and technology-supported assessments. Formal formative assessment, on the other hand, often involves norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests. Many districts rely on commercially produced assessments to gather data for use in monitoring students' growth. Results on such measures then can be compared with evidence of learning demonstrated in the classroom.

Summative content-area assessment enables teachers, students, and families to gain a sense of students' achievement at the end of a longer period of time. Portfolios provide educators with a highly adaptable means of authentically assessing students' performance and progress. At the other end of the spectrum, formal high-stakes tests provide students opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge on comprehensive standardized assessments. The efforts of classroom teachers to engage CLD students in critical thinking and cognitively complex tasks (while providing necessary scaffolds), develop learners' test-taking skills and strategies, and continually build students' self-confidence as capable learners, can go a long way to promote their achievement on high-stakes assessments.

The role of language in the content-area assessment of CLD students must always be taken into account. Providing accommodations on high-stakes tests is valid, if students received the same types of accommodations during the original instruction over the concepts, skills, and processes. Students rely on us to provide the supports that make their access to, and engagement with, the curriculum possible. Likewise, they depend on us to advocate on their behalf for the types of accommodations that allow them to demonstrate most accurately what they know and are able to do on high-stakes assessments.

Because we all view content-area curricula and instruction through the lens of our own backgrounds and socialization, it is important to recognize the potential of bias in our classroom-based assessments. Weighing assessments and test items against the knowledge that we have of our students and their unique backgrounds and needs is a necessary step if we are to identify as many potential sources of bias as possible. Asking colleagues to provide an outside opinion also can be beneficial.

Inevitably, teachers working with CLD students are faced with questions about "the grade" for their content-area learning. Holding a perspective that values process as much as product can go a long way in helping us to devise grading criteria that are equitable for students and that result in grades that provide useful information to all stakeholders. Reflecting on the overall purpose of the lesson/unit/class and its various components and target skills can support us to identify possibilities, weigh options, and make well-reasoned decisions.

Content-area assessment also has implications for programming-related issues. The content knowledge and skills that student may have acquired through instruction in the native language must not be ignored. These assets often are overlooked, when the primary emphasis is on identifying students' skills (and gaps) in English. Our goal, as educators, is to provide students with programs and supports that allow students to best maximize their potential. This might require us to think outside the box with respect to placement, continually challenge students with rigorous curriculum and instruction, and seek data that might indicate a students' readiness for redesignation (while acknowledging the need for ongoing monitoring and support).

KEY CONCEPTS

Commercially produced assessment
Criterion-referenced test
Curriculum-based measurement (CBM)
Formative assessment
General outcome measurement
High-stakes tests
Inquiry assessment/Inquiry-based learning
Mastery measurement
Norm-referenced test
Observation assessment
Point-in-time assessment
Self-assessment
Summative assessment
Teacher-made test
Technology-supported assessment

PROFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS ON PRACTICE

1. Discuss why formative content-area assessments might be better than summative assessments for accommodating instruction and promoting learning for CLD students.
2. Discuss the purpose of assessment and ways that high-stakes tests are consistent and inconsistent with this purpose.
3. Discuss how bias may be exhibited in classroom-based content-area assessments. What can teachers do to minimize bias?

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW AND REFLECTION

1. What are key features of effective inquiry assessment? Describe at least two.
2. What tips can support teachers to develop their own informal content-area assessments for CLD students? List at least three.
3. What are the advantages of point-in-time assessments? Discuss at least two.
4. How do mastery and general outcome measurement differ?
5. What general steps should teachers follow as they develop curriculum-based measures (CBMs) of content-area learning?
6. When considering use of technology-supported assessments with CLD students, what benefits and concerns should teachers keep in mind? List at least three benefits and two concerns.
7. What is the difference between criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments?
8. When interpreting the results of formal formative assessments, what considerations should teachers bear in mind? List at least three.
9. What assessment-related problems might occur when translating tests from English to a CLD student's native language? Specify at least two.
10. What questions should teachers ask themselves as they reflect on how to assign a grade for CLD students' content-area learning? List at least three.