

More-Effective-Strategies-Transcript

Larry: Welcome to classroom Q&A I'm Larry Ferlazzo. Assessment is a key element of teaching. We need to know where students are in the learning process and how effective our instructional strategies have been and if there are additional challenges we need to be aware of. Assessments, however, cannot be used in a one size fits all strategy. Today will explore what assessment strategies schools ELL teachers in mainstream courses and content teachers can use to effectively assess English language learners. My guests today are Vivian Simmons, Margo Gottlieb, and Cindy Garcia who have also contributed written commentaries to the classroom Q&A column education. Welcome everybody! Let's say I'm teaching a quote unquote mainstream content class: math, science, social studies or writing. What is one thing I should be looking for and or one thing I should do to more effectively assess ELLS were in my class, Margo?

Margo: I would say you have to make assessment more multi-modal. That is understanding that multiple language learners or multi-lingual learners can best show their conceptual development not only through language but through music and art and visual means and other images. And so, if in fact you couple these multi-modal resources along with text, multilingual learners have an advantage over other means.

Larry: And so, as a result, the assessments would be more of the actual assessing content as opposed to assessing language.

Margo: Correct.

Vivian: I would say when assessing culturally and linguistically diverse students it's always good to think about your own experiences as a language learner. Do you function best when it was all paper pencil or for example when you were exposed to listening activities with no other type of support like visuals or subtitles? I would just say for assessment strategies try to get as much information from many different activities as possible not to base everything solely on one activity but multiple ones.

Larry: especially if it's a summative assessment. Right? I mean you don't want to put all your eggs in one basket on that. OK , good.

Cindy: I would say making the time to have one-on-one conferences with students because that provides the opportunity to assess their thinking in the content area ,but also with language proficiency and it allows the teacher and the student to interact using all four language domains.

Margot: I would say that in this day and age I think it's critical that all teachers, especially content teachers, give multi-lingual learners, as well as all students, choices and that whatever instructional strategies they're

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using are extended to assessment and always to remember the students assets and have the children have a voice in their decision making.

Larry: great addition.

Vivian: Yes please think that we all function differently. We are all intelligent with a certain domain you know area or language skills but we all have something good to bring to the classroom so just give those opportunities to students to show what they know in different ways.

Larry: And really just look at our students through the lens of assets they bring as opposed deficits. Let's consider grades. What guidelines should quote unquote mainstream content teachers use to fairly grade ELLs?

Cindy: I think one thing to keep in mind is that when grading you're grading the content understanding not necessarily the language proficiency of the students. So as teachers are grading and assessing it's keeping the different indicators in mind.

Vivian: I'd also say if you're in ESL teacher ,or even if you're not, check the WIDA can-do statements and get a better guidance from those and after that I will keep saying grading should be a collection of all different activities in the classroom with all four domains.

Larry: And just to make sure everybody is aware WIDA is a multi-state consortium group that provides support to ELLs and ELL teachers across the country. And Margo would be a great person to elaborate on that if you want to for moment of what WIDA is as well as answering the question.

Margot: Larry you're correct WIDA has as its mission to enhance teaching and learning from multi-lingual learners and educators. We are in all 40 States and 500 international schools presently and we have just published a brand new 2020 edition of our English language development framework so that may be a helpful tool for teachers as well. In terms of grading,

I think it's critical that we move away from letters and numbers and look more at criteria for success and make it transparent for multilingual learners so they in fact work in conjunction with teachers so they're both moving teaching and learning forward.

Larry: Great so I'm teaching my ELL class of intermediates and newcomers. What is your assessment advice in this kind of class? Margo?

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Margo: I would say to base it what kind of assessment are you talking about? First of all, it depends on the purpose for the assessment but second of all I would say that it's critical that we base assessment on students' passions and their interests, and we work from their linguistic cultural developmental milestones, where they are on the continuum, and always think about how each and every student can in fact work on our project, as we said before, in many different ways.

Larry: Could you maybe give me a quick example - a concrete example - of an assessment that you think would be useful for the ELL teacher to use to help monitor progress and to identify a student's challenges and knowledge?

Margot: first of all I think it has to be generated from a teacher team or leadership team and not something that's imposed upon a school. Second of all, I think teachers have to work in collaboration with each other in order to ensure that the multilingual learners will indeed be engaged in the assessment. What specifically, again it depends on the purpose for the assessment, if it's more of an accountability assessment to see where the students are in relation to where they need to go then you have to think about the extent of the assessment.

Vivian: like my partners have said if we do not have a like one created assessment already I would just go with a portfolio. Like a collection of work from the students that will include listening activities, writing, reading and speaking. But in all of those I will urge teachers to provide support and check for growth - not for letters or numbers like one of our partners said -but for growth. How did they start at the beginning of the unit how did they end with the listening and the writing and reading and speaking activities? So I would say a portfolio.

Larry: Yeah growth is really important for students to see their own growth and one thing that I often do is have students record themselves at the beginning of the year in reading a passage and then record themselves in mid-year and at the end of the year and they were able to see the dramatic improvement in their fluency.

Cindy: I agree I think having authentic work samples where students have had to apply what they are learning is very important. And then using a rubric can be an effective way to assess student learning because there can be multiple and a variety of indicators for both content understanding and language proficiency and development.

Larry: now it's time for our lightning round. You get to answer in one sentence. It's unfair. But so what? So what is one question a teacher should ask themselves prior to either assessing ELLs or planning an assessment? Cindy?

Cindy: what is the purpose of the assessment?

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Larry: Vivian?

Vivian: Do I have enough data collection from different sources to make final judgments on what my students can produce?

Larry: Margo?

Margot: how can I help my students drive this assessment?

Larry: great final sentences. So I'd like to thank Margo Gottlieb, Vivian Simmons and Cindy Garcia for participating in our conversation today on assessments for ELLS and you can see their written commentaries in my blog this week. Thanks everybody!

