

# **Gathering Data for Assessment**

## **1. Language Proficiency Profile**

Develop a profile of ESL students' proficiencies in the English language. Use a range of strategies to learn about their oral and written language proficiencies. Assessment strategies that may be appropriate for students who have studied English for six years will not be appropriate for students who have never been exposed to formal English instruction.

If students appear to have no previous experience with English and are unable to answer basic questions or write responses to simple questions, the assessment will be fairly brief.

Classroom teachers can begin by completing checklists, collecting work samples and writing anecdotal notes. Consider that the results of initial assessments may be skewed due to the stress and dislocation students are feeling. It is important to observe ongoing classroom performance to most accurately gauge students' abilities. If possible, have multilingual staff conduct interviews and assessments to obtain valuable information.

## **2. Oral Language Proficiency**

The purpose of assessing ESL students' oral language proficiencies is to gather information about how well they both understand what is said and can make themselves understood.

Record students' spoken English in response to any of the following activities to provide a record of their initial competencies. Listen to the recording later for specific information about students' language problems.

## **3. Personal Interview**

- Conduct a basic information-gathering interview. This interview should provide ESL students with an opportunity to demonstrate both listening comprehension and the ability to use English appropriately. Allow for a variety of responses. Depending on students' language levels; e.g., students could:
  - point at graphics and/or words
  - give one word or short responses
  - give open-ended and longer responses
  - give responses that demonstrate knowledge of specific language structures.

### **Picture Prompts**

- Use pictures of familiar activities and topics; e.g., a family eating a meal at home.

Ask students to talk about the pictures.

### **Recorded Prompts**

- Listen to a recorded sample of oral English. Play the recording two or three times, then ask comprehension questions. Use recorded prompts with a group of students or individually.

### **Video Prompts**

- View part of a videotape or television show. Ask questions about the segment. Ask students to describe what they saw and prompt with vocabulary, if necessary. An educational documentary works best because television shows often contain cultural references that may interfere with or complicate the assessment.

It is recommended that assessments be done: At the beginning of the student's first year At the end of the student's first year (May?) Each May after that as long as they are ESL.

### **Standardized Tests**

Standardized tests for English-speaking students are based on linguistic and cultural norms that are not appropriate for ESL students. It is possible, however, to make judicious use of some standardized tests in conjunction with other forms of assessment. Standardized tests should be used and interpreted with caution. Tests designed for ESL students should also be used with the knowledge that linguistic and cultural backgrounds may affect results.

Standardized tests can provide a more detailed analysis of English language ability, especially if test results are used for placement and programming purposes. The following tests can be administered by classroom teachers trained and experienced in the use of individually administered assessment instruments. Each publisher outlines the minimum requirements for administering a specific standardized assessment tool.

Source: Alberta Education, 2007, [English as a Second Language: Guide to Implementation](#), pages 26 - top of page 29