Portfolio Based Language Assessment

Maximizing the Potential of Assessment for Learning

Joanne Pettis
February 2013

Map of Session

- The Context for PBLA
  - Emerging conceptions of assessment
  - The Language Learning Journey
  - PBLA
  - Portfolio Contents
  - Integrating PBLA into instruction
  - Tools and Resources

+ Assessment is…

- *… a systematic approach to collecting information on student learning and performance based on various sources of evidence to inform teaching and help students learn more*

Purposes of Assessment

- Diagnostic (placement needs)

- Formative

- Summative

My 2003 – 2004 Quest

- An approach to assessment that would…

  - be applicable in all instructional settings and at all CLB levels

  - Address formative and summative assessment purposes

  - promote learning

  - reflect CLB principles

  - build on and extend teacher expertise

Raising Standards; Empowering Learners

- Assessment that is **planned for**, is **goal driven** and **engages teachers and students in reflection and dialogue** that has the most impact on raising standards and empowering lifelong learners.

ARG, 2002

Telling the Story: PBLA

- Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) is an approach to assessment in language training programs that engages teachers and students in dialogue to **tell the story** of the student's journey in learning English and meeting their personal goals.

Telling the Story: PBLA (cont'd)

- PBLA is embedded in curriculum and is an integral part of the teaching and learning cycle. Teachers and students collaborate to **set language learning goals** and identify **criteria** for success, compile **numerous examples** of language proficiency and learning in a **variety of contexts** over time, **analyze** the data, and **reflect** on progress.

Type of Portfolio

- Learning Portfolios
  - Document learning over time in relationship to goals and needs

- Presentation Portfolios
  - Showcase exemplary work and skills, often for employment purposes

The Language Learning Journey

- "Road Trip" Metaphor

  - A road trip has a starting point and an intended destination. On the way, travelers collect keepsakes, photos, journal entries… These mementoes are sorted, organized and collected in scrapbooks so the traveler can show them when telling others about their trip.

+ Portfolio Contents: Personal Information, such as…

- CLB placement levels on entry into class

- Needs Assessment

- Goal Statement

- Autobiography

ACTIVITY: What is the purpose of these items?

Portfolio Contents: Language Samples

- Assessment tasks and skill-using activities
  - Listening, speaking, reading, writing and (in ESL Literacy classes) numeracy
  - Addressing the range of CLB competencies (e.g. interacting socially, instructions, getting things done, and information)
  - Learning intents and criteria for success should be developed/shared with students

- Students also maintain inventories for each skill of portfolio contents

+ Portfolio Contents: Feedback and Reflection

- Action-oriented teacher feedback on tasks to help Ss close the gap between current and desired performance

- Self-assessment (often using the Can Do Checklists)

- Reflection on learning

+ Protocol: Beginning of the Term

- Set aside a regular time (usually weekly) to do PBLA-related activities

- Intro students to new PBLA resources

- Intro students to the concepts and develop the language skills for PBLA

- Record entering levels, needs and goals

- Add autobiography, and samples of language

- Begin master list of portfolio tasks

+ Protocol: Throughout the Term

- Add samples of language learning:
  - FT class – 2-3 language task samples + reflection per week
  - PT class – 2-4 language tasks sample + reflection every 2 weeks
  - (you need about 6 tasks per skill to make a CLB decision)

- Periodically review the portfolio and discuss progress

+ Protocol: At the End of the Term

- Collect portfolios

- Use master list to review and evaluate portfolio data and other documentation (e.g. anecdotal records, SAM tasks, test results…)

- Write progress report (on Tutela.ca)

- Discuss progress report with students, referencing items in the portfolio (There should be no surprises for the student.)

A Look at One Teacher's Week

- Monday
  - Remind students what the class did last week (theme, tasks and learning activities). Have Ss discuss in small groups then individually complete a learning reflection.
  - Hand back assessment task/s from prev. week. Discuss feedback and action plan.
  - Have Ss put items into portfolio and fin out portfolio inventory.
  - Intro new theme and language tasks.
  - Begin Awareness-raising activities

A Look at One Teacher's Week (cont'd)

- Tuesday
  - Awareness-raising and skill-building activities cont'd

- Wednesday
  - Skill-building activities cont'd

- Thursday
  - Skill-building cont'd and skill-using activities

- Friday
  - Assessment task/s and transfer activities

Application of Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies . . .

1. Clarify learning intents and criteria for success

2. Develop classroom tasks that elicit evidence of learning

3. Provide feedback that moves learners forward

4. Activate students to become instructional resources for one another

5. Activate students to become owners of their learning

PBLA Support: PD and resources

- Introductory and ongoing PD

- Administrative time for 'moderating' activities with colleagues

- PBLA Guide and teaching resources

+ PBLA Supports: Lead Teachers

- Successfully complete upfront training, implement PBLA in their own classes for 2 semesters, complete assignments

- Introduce PBLA to their colleagues with support from their Regional trainers

- Provide ongoing support to their colleagues as they implement PBLA

+ PBLA Supports: The Language Companion

- A binder for students

- Supports their language learning & settlement (NOT a textbook or curriculum)

- Houses students' language portfolio

- Three versions:
  - EAL Literacy
  - Stage 1
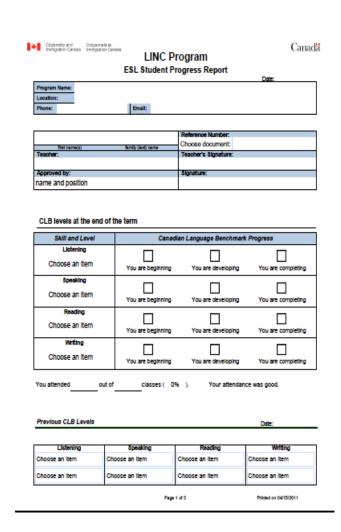 - Stage 2

Standardized Progress Reports

Page 1:
- Program & student info,
- Attendance
- Current & previous CLB levels

Page 2:
- Language learning
         Comments

Page 3:
- Additional Comments
- Suggestions
- Student Comments

Assessment that is explicitly designed to promote learning is the single most powerful tool we have for both raising standards and empowering lifelong learners. (ARG 2002)

Thank you