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WHY ASSESS

Assessment comes in various forms and addresses many purposes. One of the main reasons for teachers to assess student learning is to obtain feedback that will guide teaching and assist in making modifications to lesson planning and delivery to ensure student progress. Assessment allows teachers to monitor progress, diagnose individual or group difficulties and adjust teaching practices. Assessment can support student motivation when students are provided with ongoing information about their progress and with opportunities to set further goals for learning. Sharing the results of assessment with students, parents, other teachers and administrators provides them with an indication of student progress. All forms of assessment are done with purpose, involve professional decision-making and support learning.

Assessment for guiding teaching practices

The assessment process informs teachers about what individual students know and what they are able to do in relation to learner outcomes. As a result, teachers can make decisions about which types of content and skill development need to be addressed further by the class as a whole or by individual students.

WHAT TO ASSESS

The FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE NINE-YEAR PROGRAM OF STUDIES (GRADE 4 TO GRADE 12) guides teachers in terms of what to assess. Before students are assessed, they need to be given sufficient time and multiple opportunities to develop knowledge and skills related to the general and specific outcomes in all four components of the program of studies.

CURRENT TRENDS IN CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

Tasks developed for assessment purposes should reflect and relate to familiar classroom activities, and they often resemble situations or activities that students and native speakers of French could encounter in their day-to-day lives. Any activity carried out in class can lead to an assessment. The teacher assesses content in the same way it was taught, rather than providing students with an assessment that differs from the learning situation.

The terms **formative evaluation** and **summative evaluation** are being redefined in education circles. Many teachers know formative evaluation as the informal, daily type of assessment they use with students while learning is occurring. Summative evaluation was the term used to “sum it all up,” to indicate a final standing at the end of a unit or a course.

Current trends in assessment focus on judging student progress in three ways: **assessment for learning**, **assessment as learning** and **assessment of learning**.¹ Each assessment approach serves a different purpose.

Assessment *for* learning is especially useful for teachers as they develop, modify and differentiate teaching and learning activities. It is continuous and sustained throughout the learning process and indicates to students their progress and growth.

Assessment *as* learning focuses on fostering and supporting metacognitive development in students as they learn to monitor and reflect upon their own learning and to use the information gathered to support and direct new learning.

Assessment *of* learning is cumulative in nature. It is used to confirm what students already know and what they can do in relation to the program of studies outcomes.

What is now being divided into two approaches—assessment *for* and assessment *as* learning—was until very recently seen and promoted under a single focus formally known as formative evaluation or assessment *for* learning. Formative assessment (comprised of both assessment *for* and assessment *as* learning) can be defined as follows:

... the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers, to identify where the learners are in the learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.
(Assessment Reform Group 2001, cited in Gardner 2006, p. 2)

This is in contrast to assessment approaches that result in course or unit grades or marks, known formerly as summative evaluation and more recently as **assessment of learning**.

¹ Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education, *Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind—Assessment for Learning; Assessment as Learning; Assessment of Learning*, 2006.

Assessment of learning refers to strategies designed to confirm what students know, demonstrate whether or not they have met curriculum outcomes or the goals of their individualized programs, or to certify proficiency and make decisions about students' future program or placements.

(Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education 2006, p. 55)

Current research demonstrates that a focus on assessment *for* learning improves overall learning and can be a powerful motivator for students (Gardner 2006). For teachers, assessment *for* learning is invaluable in terms of obtaining diagnostic information that can be used for differentiated instruction.

Assessment *for* learning

In assessment *for* learning, teachers monitor the progress made by each student in relation to the program of studies outcomes and determine upcoming learning needs. Teachers ensure that learning outcomes are clear and detailed and ensure that they assess according to these outcomes. They use a range of methods to gather and to provide students with descriptive feedback to further student learning. These methods may include checklists and written notes based on observations of students as they learn. The descriptive feedback gathered is used to inform planning for learning and to assist the teacher in differentiating instruction in order to meet the needs of all students. The feedback may be shared in oral or written form with individual students or with the class as a whole. As the information gathered guides the planning process, it leads to the improvement of future student performance in relation to specific outcomes.

▮ *Example:* Students participate in a pair oral activity involving a field of experience with which they have been working. The teacher lets the class know which criteria he or she will be focusing on when observing students as they speak with each other. For example, the teacher might observe whether or not students can ask questions and provide answers or whether they can share particular information and communicate the message comprehensibly. The teacher records observations of some students using a criterion-referenced checklist, similar to the one provided in **Appendix U**. The teacher uses the results of the observations to determine which kinds of structures or practice need to be worked on further by the entire class or by individual students. The teacher lets the class know how the observations are directing decision-making as a whole, without making reference to specific individuals.

Teacher reflections

Assessment procedures are planned and methodical. It is important to reflect on why and when a teacher assesses students' progress. The types of reflective questions that teachers can ask themselves when engaged in assessment *for* learning include:

- ▶ Am I observing in order to find out what my students know or are able to do?

- ▶ Does my assessment strategy allow student learning to be apparent? Are there elements I need to change in order to minimize anxiety or distractions that might get in the way of learning?
- ▶ Will I use the results of my observation to modify my instruction, either with this individual student or group of students, or the next time I teach this concept or skill to a new class?
- ▶ Will I share the results of my observations with the individual student, so that the student and I can decide how to improve future performance?
- ▶ Will I share the results of my observations with the class in general (without identifying particular students) in order to provide some indicators as to where they can improve future performance?

Assessment *as* learning

Assessment *as* learning focuses on the role students play in their learning. In this approach to assessment, students are viewed as the bridge between what they know and the unknown that is still to be learned. Their role is to assess critically both what and how they are learning. They learn to monitor their thinking and learning processes; to understand how they are acquiring and retaining new information or developing new skills and awareness; and how to make adjustments, adaptations and even changes when necessary. For some students, being asked to reflect on their learning using skills and strategies related to metacognition (to think about thinking) might seem new and uncomfortable. They may need help to come to the realization that learning is a conscious process in which knowledge is constructed when the known, or previously acquired, encounters the new or unknown. This process often results in the restructuring or reintegration of what was previously learned.

When a focus on assessment *as* learning is implemented, students are often provided with tools for reflection including open-ended questions, self-assessment grids or checklists and the like. Student self-reflections are not used for grading purposes, but rather to help students learn about how they learn, what learning barriers they encounter and what strategies they can select in order to meet the learning goals they set for themselves. The purpose of reflection is to help students achieve deeper understandings of themselves, so that they become better equipped to look at themselves critically and become more effective decision makers *vis-à-vis* their own learning. To achieve this, students need to be trained in the reflective process and shown the importance of becoming aware of their strengths and their challenges so as to improve learning. Structured, modelled practice over time will provide students with the opportunity to develop the independence they need to monitor their own learning.

▮ *Example:* Students have revisited, in French, the names of common school areas in a junior high school. Students are paired off and have been asked to prepare a drawing of a new school plan for future renovations and to prepare an oral description of the colours of classrooms, the location of the different areas found in the new school and one unique feature that the new school will have.

Students practise their presentation in front of another pair before presenting it to the class. Afterwards, the teacher provides students with a reflection sheet similar to the one found in **Appendix U**. Students can record their reflections by completing sentence starters such as “Things that went well ...”; “Things that got in my way ...”; “Next time I will ...” Alternatively, they may check off various statements that apply to themselves or their performance on a checklist, including items such as “To create my message, I () used a model of a similar text () prepared a draft ...”; “When I presented, I () made sure to use eye contact, () spoke clearly ...” When they have finished, students file the reflection sheet in a special folder, knowing that it will be reviewed along with other reflections in a one-on-one conference with the teacher and led by the student. The dates and times of the one-on-one meeting are posted on a schedule in the classroom. Students work on their own for a portion of each class when the teacher has a scheduled meeting with one of their peers.

Teacher reflections

The types of reflective questions that teachers can ask themselves when planning opportunities in support of assessment *as learning* include:

- ▶ Are the students familiar with the purpose of reflective tools such as the one I am thinking of using? Will they be able to engage with the questions in a meaningful way?
- ▶ Have I provided/will I provide support for students in accordance with the various points mentioned in the reflective instrument; i.e., do I provide clear instructions, create a model, share a checklist, ensure that there are reference materials?
- ▶ Have I implemented a system to collect similar types of reflective instruments over time, so students can see their progress in relation to their goals and the program of studies outcomes?
- ▶ Will the time invested by students completing this reflective instrument be greater than the time they spent on the actual learning activity?
- ▶ Have I planned time to speak with all students individually or in pairs to assist them in drawing conclusions about their own learning? How can I help them to articulate what has been done well and what needs improvement, and help them to identify their next steps toward a clear, long-term learning goal?
- ▶ As my students work on a task I have assigned them, do I often encourage them to compare their work in progress with checklists, rubrics or exemplars I have provided for their use?
- ▶ Do I plan for regular—but not too frequent—intervals for students to articulate and show their learning to someone else?

Assessment *of learning*

Assessment of learning focuses on the cumulative results of learning. It involves providing information on student knowledge or performance, in a quantified fashion, as it directly relates to specific assessed outcomes. *Assessment of learning* takes place at specific times in the instructional sequence, such as at the end of a series of lessons, at the end of a unit or at the end of the school year. Its purpose is to determine

the degree of success students have had in attaining the program outcomes. Assessment *of learning* involves more than just quizzes and tests. It should allow students to move beyond recall to a demonstration of the complexities of their understanding and their ability to use the language. Furthermore, in assessment *of learning* students should be able to apply key concepts or demonstrate their new knowledge and skills in ways that are authentic.

Assessment *of learning* can take the form of communicative tasks or other performance tasks, educational projects, quizzes, tests or final examinations. It includes a wide range of demonstrations of learning such as portfolios, performances, displays, simulations, multimedia projects and more.

Student progress is reported by way of a mark, e.g., a percentage or letter grade, a few times a year or a term. The report card is usually received by students, their parents/guardians as well as by school administrators.

☞ *Example:* At the conclusion of a unit entitled PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES, each student records orally “*mon plan d’activités quotidien pour cette semaine,*” in which the student explains how he or she will integrate at least 30 minutes of activity throughout the day. For example, the student might say, *Voici mon plan d’activités quotidien pour la semaine prochaine. Lundi matin, je vais me lever tôt pour faire une promenade de 15 minutes avec mon chien. Après l’école, je vais jouer au basket-ball avec mes amis pendant 30 minutes. Mardi, je vais aller à ma classe de natation et je vais faire 10 longueurs de piscine après la classe. Mercredi, pendant l’heure du dîner, je vais participer aux intramuros de soccer intérieur. Jeudi matin, je vais me lever tôt pour faire une promenade de 15 minutes avec mon chien. Après le souper, je vais jouer au basket-ball avec mes amis. Vendredi, après le souper, je vais aller avec mes amis au terrain de jeu pour jouer un match de football.* Once all students have recorded their presentation, the teacher listens to the recordings and assesses them based on criteria related to the learner outcomes that have been shared with students in advance. The resulting grades are presented as part of a report card mark, a portfolio or at a parent-student-teacher conference.

Teacher reflections

The types of reflective questions that teachers can ask themselves when planning opportunities in support of assessment *of learning* include:

- ▶ Am I using processes and assessment instruments that allow students to demonstrate their competence and skill fully?
- ▶ Do these assessments align with the manner in which students were taught the material?
- ▶ Do these assessments allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills as per the program of studies outcomes?
- ▶ Am I allowing all students an equal chance to highlight their learning?

- ▶ Since I am checking learning for reporting purposes, how do I know whether the assessment tool I am using is valid and truly reflects the outcomes that it purports to assess?
- ▶ Do I have clear and defensible reference points for making judgements? Are my processes transparent?
- ▶ What is my rationale for undertaking this particular assessment at this time?
- ▶ How reliable, consistent, fair and free from bias is the information I am gathering? Would another teacher arrive at the same conclusion based on the criteria I am following?
- ▶ Do I have sufficient information about the learning of each particular student or do I need to gather more?
- ▶ What am I going to do with the information once it is gathered? Will I, for example, share it back with the student as part of more assessment *for* and *as* learning?
- ▶ Are the records I am keeping detailed and accurate enough so I can provide meaningful information to students, parents and others using my notes? Have I included all pertinent information such as dates and criteria?

ASSESSING EFFECTIVELY

Teachers can ensure that their methods of assessment are effective by ensuring that they:

- ▶ strive for clarity
- ▶ maintain balance
- ▶ ensure validity and reliability
- ▶ accommodate individual needs and differences.

STRIVING FOR CLARITY

In order to support student success, teachers need to be clear about not only what they want students to do, but what it is they want students to learn. The purpose and key elements of each learning task, as well as each assessment activity, should be identified for students. Expectations can be stated orally but should be backed up in writing so that students have a point of reference at a later time. Furthermore, the availability of copies of exemplars or samples of student work is very helpful in order to communicate expectations clearly to students. In the absence of student samples, teachers can create sample products they expect their students to produce, limiting themselves to the range of vocabulary and structures known to students.

- ▮ *Example:* Before assigning a project to the class in which students prepare a fact sheet on a wild animal—defining its physical characteristics, its personality traits and three interesting facts about the animal—the teacher provides students with a model, in transparency form, that follows the criteria given to the students. Then the teacher goes over the task and the criteria with the students to ensure that they understand what is expected of them.

MAINTAINING BALANCE

It is the teacher's responsibility to decide when, how often and in which ways it is appropriate to assess students. A solid assessment plan leads to successful student learning and language skill development. Such a plan seeks to balance the three approaches to assessment; i.e., assessment *for*, *as* and *of* learning, while also reflecting a balance between the four components of the program of studies and the four language skills.

Not everything needs to be assessed all the time. There is no obligation to assess each activity completed in class. However, it is essential to be informed of where students are in their learning, what prior knowledge they have and what preconceptions or gaps they may have related to the material that is being taught.

Regular, systematic assessment, along with periodic celebrations of success, encourage students to do their best, to be involved in their learning and to focus their attention on the knowledge they are acquiring and the skills they are developing.

ENSURING RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

By using many different assessment practices and instruments, teachers provide students and themselves with a better picture of student skills and accomplishments than they would if they limited themselves to the repeated use of a narrow range of instruments.

Reliability comes from cross-referencing the results of a range of assessment instruments and finding that the results of the various pieces of evidence corroborate each other. The combination of practices related to assessment *for* learning, such as anecdotal notes, and assessment *of* learning, such as performance tasks, along with conversations held with students as part of assessment *as* learning allow the teacher to draw reliable conclusions about students' learning.

Just as teachers need to ensure that their assessment processes provide them with enough consistent information to allow for reliability when assessing students' learning, so must they ensure that the assessment tools and processes are valid; i.e., that there is a good match between the intended learning, the tool being used to assess the intended learning and the decisions being made as a result of that instrument's use.

ACCOMMODATING FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND DIFFERENCES

Assessment impacts student motivation and self-esteem; therefore, sensitivity to the needs and learning styles of individual students is just as important when assessing as when teaching.

Using a range of assessment instruments and practices ensures sensitivity to different learning styles and provides students with varied opportunities to demonstrate their achievement. Students who are learning English as a second language and students who have behavioural, intellectual, physical or communication-related exceptionalities may benefit from adjustments to the kind, breadth, depth and pace of assessment provided by the teacher. Adjustments could include a reduction in criteria, an increase in time or additional support. All students benefit when the focus of assessment is on what a student **can** do, rather than on what a student **cannot** do, since assessment should be about growth and progress, not about failure.

NEW ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IMPLY NEW TEACHING PRACTICES

When preparing to implement all three assessment purposes, some teachers may find that in addition to redefining terminology, they will need to make adjustments in how they see their role as a teacher as well as in the selection of teaching practices they choose to employ. Teachers may find that when assessment is seen in new ways, so too are the roles of the teacher and the student in the regulation of student learning. As a result, some teachers find themselves seeking more professional development opportunities that update their understanding of learning theories in which students are seen as being active in their own learning. They may seek ways in which to foster the development of a community of learners within their classrooms. They may also feel unsettled as they move their practice from one in which they were the presenters of knowledge to one in which the responsibility for learning is shared with the class (Black and Wiliam 2006, pp. 16–17).

Professional development projects that have tracked teachers' needs as they implement an increased focus on assessment *for* and assessment *as* learning have found that teachers need “time, freedom and support from colleagues, in order to reflect critically upon and to develop their practice” (Black and Wiliam 2006, p. 19). James and Pedder (2006) identify a number of factors that relate to teachers' professional learning when it comes to changing assessment practices. These include developing the desire and ability to make learning explicit, promoting learner autonomy, promoting inquiry and working toward building social capital. **Appendix U** includes a teacher self-assessment instrument that can be used to reflect on the degree to which these factors are currently reflected in one's practice.

Appendix U also includes some sample assessment materials that can be used and adapted for a particular classroom context.

Alberta Education has produced a sample of classroom assessment materials for French as a Second Language which can be accessed and downloaded at <http://education.alberta.ca/francais/teachers/progres/compl/fsl/support/niney.aspx>. Teachers may model their own assessment instruments after many of the materials included in this document.

Additional samples are available in the series of ten kits that were produced by Alberta Education for grades 7 to 9.

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

In the sections that follow, various assessment practices and instruments are associated with one of the three purposes for assessment. An overview is provided in **Figure 8.1**. However, the use of these practices and instruments is not limited to a single purpose—many can be used in different ways for all three purposes. What is important is that teachers first clarify the purpose of assessment and then select the method that best suits the purpose they have in mind for that particular context.

What is key, especially in the case of assessment *as* learning, is that the instruments provide students with the opportunity to consider their learning and to judge their work in relation to criteria, models, and examples of other students' work or exemplars, all of which provide information to students about successful learning.

The following discussion provides an overview of the different practices and variety of instruments that can be used and tailored to meet the needs of a specific assessment purpose.

ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND INSTRUMENTS

| Assessment Practices and Suggested Instruments |
|---|
| Assessment <i>for</i> Learning |
| Informal observation Anecdotal notes/records Observation checklists/Rating scales Performance Assessment Tasks Question and Answer/Classroom dialogue Quizzes or Tests Rubrics/Scoring guides |
| Assessment <i>as</i> Learning |
| Conferencing/Learning conversations Learning logs/journals/E-journals Peer assessment/coaching Portfolios Quizzes or Tests Rubrics/Scoring guides Self-assessment and Goal setting |
| Assessment <i>of</i> Learning |
| Performance Tasks/Projects Portfolios Quizzes Rubrics/Scoring guides Tests or Examinations |

Figure 8.1: Overview of Assessment Practices and Suggested Instruments

Practices and instruments related to assessment *for* learning

INFORMAL OBSERVATION

- ▶ may be used when assessing the effectiveness of a particular teaching strategy or the progress of an individual or an entire class in relation to learning outcomes. Because this practice is used solely to make adjustments in the instructional plan, no notes or grades are recorded.
- ▶ assists teachers in determining whether and when review is necessary and when it is time to move on to new material.

ANECDOTAL NOTES (also referred to as ANECDOTAL RECORDS)

- ▶ are used for recording specific observations of individual student behaviours, skills and attitudes.
- ▶ are brief, objective and focused on specific outcomes.
- ▶ are usually most accurate if recorded during or immediately following an activity.
- ▶ can be shared with students and parents if they contain information on individual students only.
- ▶ can provide cumulative information on student learning and direction for further instruction.

📖 *Suggestion:* The teacher may keep a binder with a separate page for each student. Observations can be recorded on sticky notes with the student's name and date and moved to the appropriate page in the binder at a later time, along with an entry showing the name of the activity and the targeted specific outcome the activity was addressing. A class list can be kept in front of the binder on which students' names are checked off as anecdotal notes are added. In this way teachers can see which students may not have been observed as frequently as others in order to target them for future observations.

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Kendra M.

- *used models posted, and was able to reformulate them to suit her purposes*
- *hesitated when trying to make correct adjectival agreement but asked her partner for help if she was uncertain*
- *after answering the required questions, she was able ask her partner similar questions to keep the conversation going*

OBSERVATION CHECKLISTS and/or RATING SCALES

- ▶ allow for quick recording of information about individual or group performance in relation to specific outcomes.
- ▶ allow teachers to indicate the degree or frequency of specific behaviours, skills and strategies displayed by the learner. Rating

scales include specific criteria along with three or four response selections to describe quality or frequency of an aspect of student achievement.

- ▶ are often written to allow for either–or choices such as yes–no; yes/not yet; or met/not met and allow teachers to indicate the absence or presence of the demonstration of a specific criterion.
- ▶ often include a mixed design: a blend of checklist, rating scale and spaces for additional brief comments to provide information not captured by other means.
- ▶ provide a record of observations over time if the teacher ensures that the dates of the observations are always included.

📄 *Suggestion:* For ease of use, students' names can be entered in a blank copy of the checklist or rating scale according to a seating arrangement frequently used in the classroom or alphabetically by first name. Then after multiple copies are made, they are ready for use, requiring the teacher to fill in only the date, the activity name and the appropriate outcomes or criteria for observation.

📄 *Suggestion:* Criteria on the checklist can be formulated in a generic way so as to apply to similar activities over time, instead of being specific to one particular activity. This way, teachers can focus on a few students each class period when similar activities are underway. The criteria on the checklist could include three to four items from a list such as the following:

- follows instructions
- takes risks to communicate
- asks for assistance
- communicates in French as much as possible
- accepts correction as a means of improving
- uses the resources available in the classroom
- works well/cooperatively in groups
- stays on task
- makes connections between knowledge of French and another subject area.

📄 *Suggestion:* The template for a generic analytic rubric included in **Appendix U** can be used or modified as needed.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TASKS OR CUMULATIVE TASKS

- ▶ are goal-oriented activities in which students construct responses, create products or demonstrate a skill they have acquired. Students are often engaged in the task because of the motivating nature of the task and not only because it serves an assessment purpose.
- ▶ may also be used toward the beginning of a particular unit of study as a way for the teacher and students to become aware of learning needs and to plan subsequent lessons accordingly.

Example: A teacher is interested in trying some of the principles of task-based learning in a Grade 8 FSL class. The students are just beginning to work with the subfield of experience of CLOTHING DESIGN, and have not yet encountered the names for all the vocabulary items related to design features of clothing. However, the teacher provides a model for a task involving a conversation between two people over the telephone in which one of speakers is talking about the new clothing item he/she has just purchased and is providing details so that the other can “visualize” what it looks like. In the model, the speakers use the type of vocabulary that the students will eventually encounter by using shopping catalogues. The conversation could sound something like this:

- *Je viens de m’acheter une nouvelle paire de jean. Il est de coupe ajustée, de taille basse, et délavé.*
- *Est-ce qu’il y a des poches?*
- *Ah, oui! Il y a deux poches en avant et deux poches à rabat en arrière avec un motif de dragon. Puis, il y a des petites fentes aux côtés en bas du jean.*
- *Ça a l’air chic!*
- *Oui, je veux porter ce jean à l’école demain...*

Working with catalogue descriptions of various clothing items, small groups of students briefly try to carry out the task of “describing their new clothing item” using the structure of the model provided. When students discover a new vocabulary item that describes a particular clothing feature, they make a note of it. In a reporting phase, the groups of students share their list of newly-discovered vocabulary items with the class. This list will be considered as the teacher plans the remainder of the unit. Toward the end of the unit, students carry out the same task and reflect on the learning that occurred in the interval.

QUESTION AND ANSWER (also referred to as CLASSROOM DIALOGUE)

- ▶ can help teachers determine what students know, understand and can do, while making the learning process more transparent for students if the questions are well-chosen and well-formulated. By expending effort to frame questions that evoke critical indicators of student understanding rather than just resorting to simple yes–no questions, teachers will more easily notice gaps and misconceptions that students may have in their understanding (Black and Wiliam 2006, p. 14).
- ▶ are most effective if the teacher adopts practices that result in longer and more thorough replies. For example, consciously applying wait time or rules related to raising hands allows all students to have time to think about a question before individuals are called upon to provide responses (*ibid*).
- ▶ help increase student involvement, promote thoughtful reflection and provide teachers with a deeper understanding of their students’ level of knowledge if teachers take all answers seriously, whether they are right or wrong (*ibid*).

- ▶ may occur in French rather than in English. However, when more complex structures or unknown vocabulary are required, students may have to use English to express their understandings.

📖 *Example:* An FSL teacher designs questions to spark student reflection on key concepts related to the functions and purpose of language or the discovery of grammatical rules or cultural aspects. Students are allowed pair or small group discussion time prior to sharing their potential answers for these questions. The teacher can follow up thoughtful student responses with meaningful teacher responses and can deal with challenges experienced by the students in order to help them extend their understanding. The teacher makes mental or written notes after hearing student responses in order to shape directions for subsequent lessons (*ibid*).

QUIZZES or TESTS

- ▶ are dealt with in more detail in the section on assessment *of* learning. However, they can be valuable when it comes to other purposes of assessment, such as assessment *for* learning.
- ▶ can provide students with an opportunity to practise what they know and are able to do in a nonthreatening manner if no mark is given.
- ▶ can supply information about student learning that is used by teachers to guide planning for future instruction.
- ▶ can involve students in the development of test questions, which lets the teacher note how well students have understood specific learning outcomes and plan future lessons accordingly.

RUBRICS or SCORING GUIDES

- ▶ are a set of criteria used to assess student performance. The design may be holistic or analytic. *Holistic* rubrics are used to support a quick or general judgement of student learning and can be used to provide a global overview of work in progress. *Analytic* rubrics define levels of performance for each criterion that makes up the rubric. This type of rubric is most commonly used when a number of criteria are needed to assess different aspects of a task. It may be used to assess a final product.
 - ▶ are developed and shared with students before they start the task for which the rubrics are developed.
 - ▶ may be designed for use with any of the three purposes of assessment.
- 📖 *Example:* A teacher uses a holistic rubric to verify whether students have completed a particular written exercise. The rubric has a three-scale design with indicators, such as “completed”, “partially completed” or “not completed.”

📖 *Example:* A teacher uses an analytic rubric to verify how well students were able to complete elements of a task. If the intent is to

guide further instruction, this use of a rubric supports assessment *for* learning. Because the students are in the early stages of learning and wide ranges of performance are difficult to define, the teacher uses a three-scale design that includes descriptors rated from 1 to 3, each of which describe a certain level of performance. The descriptions focus on the quality of the product or performance, not on quantity; i.e., not on the number of paragraphs, spelling errors or supporting ideas.

The rubrics included in **Appendix U** can be used or modified as needed.

Practices and instruments related to assessment *as* learning

CONFERENCING (also referred to as LEARNING CONVERSATIONS or INTERVIEWS)

- ▶ involves purposeful and focused yet relaxed and friendly meetings; or written encounters between the teacher and the student, the teacher and a small group of students or between two students.
- ▶ involves a limited number of topics at one time. The purpose of the meeting and the expectations of all participants are clarified before the conference begins.
- ▶ exposes students to the language and processes related to critical self-assessment and peer assessment as they learn to reflect on learning.

📖 *Example:* As students are preparing for a particular performance task, the teacher facilitates a conference with small groups of students to help them identify which aspects of the task they can already do well and which aspects they wish to identify as an area of growth. As part of the conference, the teacher offers concrete suggestions for improvement.

📖 *Example:* In a group conference, students have the opportunity to share their work, to emphasize what they are proud of and to ask questions. Other participants point out what they like about each student's work and offer suggestions for improvement. Students learn to use feedback about their work to make improvements. Teachers may decide to observe and record anecdotal notes during the group conference.

📖 *Example:* A student and a teacher may meet one-on-one to review anecdotal notes made by the teacher on aspects of the student's learning or to review periodically the student's file of self-assessment instruments and/or goal statements. By the end of the meeting, the student's goals in relation to a particular outcome have been revisited and possibly revised.

LEARNING LOGS, LEARNING JOURNALS or ELECTRONIC (E) LOGS or JOURNALS

- ▶ are instruments for self-reflection that come in many forms and may be implemented in various ways.
- ▶ are generally called **learning logs** if used by students to record specific objective data, such as a list of stories read, films watched, strategies tried or words being targeted for learning.
- ▶ are generally called **learning journals** if used by students to record personal reflections, questions, ideas, words or expressions they are curious about or experiences they have had in class.
- ▶ may involve varying degrees of teacher guidance; e.g., guidance on which aspects of their learning students should focus.
- ▶ may be used by students to request teacher assistance on specific points.
- ▶ will likely occur in English rather than in French with beginning students and students new to reflective thinking and writing, and will require teacher guidance. Ideally, reflective thinking and writing is done on a regular basis, with the teacher responding with oral or written advice, comments and observations. The transition to using French and to recording more independent reflection is made over time and provides a meaningful context for the students' use of French.

Appendix U includes a series of sentence starters that can be shared with students to assist them when they carry out a self-reflection activity in a learning journal.

PEER ASSESSMENT (also known as PEER COACHING or PEER CONFERENCING)

- ▶ allows students to examine each other's work in light of specific criteria and to offer encouragement and suggestions for improvement.
- ▶ provides students with an opportunity to learn how to implement the language and processes of assessment by carrying out assessments amongst themselves.
- ▶ provides students with an opportunity to share their insights about the rewards and challenges related to learning French.
- ▶ may require coaching students in the art of giving descriptive and constructive feedback rather than using broad terms such as "good" or "bad."

Students can be asked to provide two positive comments and one question about their peers' work. Sentence starters such as "I liked that you ..." can be provided.

- ▮ *Example:* After reviewing a classmate's collage that illustrates a particular subfield of experience, such as choice of pets, students fill

out a peer assessment checklist, and then discuss the results with their partner to explain their feedback. The checklist can contain statements such as “I like how you ...”; “I noticed that you ...”; “Next time you might ...”

PORTFOLIOS

- ▶ are purposeful collections of student work samples, student self-assessments and goal statements that reflect student progress. The collections may contain tangible artifacts placed within a single folder or they may consist of documents saved electronically.
- ▶ contain samples and items that students feel represent their best work or best illustrate growth in their learning. Samples are generally chosen by the student, but teachers may also recommend that specific work samples be included. Encouraging students to select items for inclusion in the portfolio helps them examine their progress and develop self-confidence and a positive sense of themselves as active learners.
- ▶ are most effective when students are in control of their portfolios and have easy access to them in order to review, update or reflect upon their contents. Once students leave a grade or class, they should be able to take the portfolios with them as these are their personal property.

📄 *Example:* A portfolio cover sheet may be filled in by students. The cover sheet may also have spaces for comments from the teacher and/or the students’ parent or guardian, depending on when and how the portfolios are shared with others. Comment starters could include statements such as “Two positive things I noticed are ...”; “One specific area to work on could be ...”; and so on.

📄 *Example:* In the place of a cover sheet for each entry, small comment cards can be completed by the student and attached to the entry. These can refer to a student’s perseverance and improvement or to processes the student used; e.g., “When I made this, I tried very hard to ...”; “I included this piece in my portfolio, because it shows how much I improved at ...”; “Please notice how I did A before B” (BC Ministry of Education, Student Self-assessment 1994, p. 19).

QUIZZES OR TESTS

- ▶ are dealt with in more detail in the section on assessment *of* learning. However, they can be valuable when it comes to the other purposes of assessment, such as assessment *as* learning, depending on how they are used.
- ▶ can help students reflect on what they can and cannot yet do in the language if they are involved in developing test questions with the teacher or are asked to recommend specific questions to include in a test.

- ▶ can trigger student self-reflection once they have been written, graded and returned to students. Research on the use of tests in the context of assessment *as learning* shows that using marked tests as the basis of student reflection and goal-setting helps improve learning. Therefore, tests can be a positive part of the learning process (Black and Wiliam 2006, p. 16). Reflections regarding particular challenges can be discussed in student-teacher conferences or reflected upon by students in their learning journals. They can help drive a study plan or be a crucial factor in goal-setting.

▮ *Example:* In preparation for a quiz or test, students go over a list of key words or topics on which the test is based and mark their current level of understanding using the colours of a traffic light. Red or amber can be used where students are totally or partially unsure of their success, and green is used where they feel their learning is secure. This allows them to see where they need to concentrate their efforts when it comes to preparing for the test (Black and Wiliam 2006, p. 15). Alternatively, students may categorize the topics along a continuum from easy to difficult to help them understand what they should focus on when preparing for a test.

Teachers may have pairs or small groups of students prepare quizzes and corresponding answer keys on a particular topic for their classmates. Prior to making copies of the quizzes available for the class, the teacher may review the answer keys to ensure their accuracy. Students can then hand out and mark the quizzes they have designed and submit the results to the teacher. The process of designing the quizzes becomes an assessment *as learning* activity for the students. The grades that are recorded can become assessment *of learning*, if so desired. Research shows that students who prepare for examinations by developing their own questions outperform students who study by other means; the process helps them develop a better overview of the topic being tested (Black and Wiliam 2006, p. 16).

▮ *Example:* By marking each other's quizzes or tests in peer groups, students recognize the need to develop rubrics or answer keys. This allows them to reflect more deeply on the nature of the concepts being taught and learned, on the purpose of various test questions and on which criteria to apply to the responses (Black and Wiliam 2006, pp. 15–16).

RUBRICS or SCORING GUIDES

- ▶ are described in more detail in the section entitled “Practices and instruments related to assessment *for learning*.”
- ▶ may be designed for use with any of the three purposes of assessment.

▮ *Example:* A teacher may choose to return a piece of student work with written comments and suggestions only, withholding the scored rubric and the numerical feedback by one day. This allows students

to reconsider their work carefully and focus on the descriptive feedback. The teacher may find that when the scored rubric and total mark are returned the next day, students have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their work (Alberta Assessment Consortium 2005, p. 36).

Example: A teacher may decide to take the time to provide detailed, descriptive, thoughtful criteria-referenced comments to one student product (**deep marking**) in order to help a student set goals for future learning. However, this would not be done with every piece of every student's work. This degree of feedback would be provided for a product or task that engaged the learner's time and attention and that would become the basis for future, similar products or tasks. Deep marking can, if desired, be applied to one aspect of a task only, whereas the remaining aspects can be assessed holistically (Alberta Assessment Consortium 2005, p. 34).

SELF-ASSESSMENT and GOAL-SETTING

- ▶ can take the form of a checklist, rating scale, rubric, learning list or learning log/journal. Any of these instruments can be used by students to indicate and reflect upon their achievement of specific outcomes.
- ▶ may involve the use of English for student reflection as well as for teacher guidance and feedback.
- ▶ allows students to develop awareness of the learner outcomes and learning processes, as well as of their own particular learning needs and styles. Students require encouragement, guidance and practice in order to become adept at reflective thinking, particularly in the beginning stages.
- ▶ may be shared by students during parent-student-teacher conferences or included in student portfolios.
- ▶ may require teacher assistance when students are setting their own goals. Teachers may help students decide what they need to focus on next in their learning and which steps they can take to reach the goals they set.
- ▶ may involve setting short-term goals which are small, specific and achievable within a short timeframe. Teachers can help students set goals by adding prompts to self-assessment tasks, such as "Next time I will"
- ▶ may involve setting long-term goals in that students look at their overall progress and identify a specific area for improvement. Teachers can support students by helping them develop a plan to meet their goals, by encouraging them to break the goal into smaller steps with particular target dates, and to share their goals with other significant adults.

Example: The teacher may provide students with a checklist of outcomes specific to a particular unit prior to commencing the unit and ask them to check off which outcomes they feel they can already

address. As the unit progresses, students return to the checklist and note additional progress over time. Teachers may use a yes/no checklist or a rating scale using indicators such as “Got it/Getting it/Don’t get it yet” in order to allow students to reflect on their levels of understanding.

Example: Self-assessment instruments may use metaphors and graphics to illustrate rating scales. For example, using the graphic metaphor of a smiley, a big grin can indicate “I completely understand!” A smaller grin can mean “I partially understand” and no grin can imply “I don’t understand or I am having difficulty.” Likewise, the rating scales can involve the use of French words, such as *Je comprends très bien!* *Je comprends assez bien!* and *Je ne comprends pas du tout!* to indicate different levels of understanding.

Example: An FSL teacher encourages student volunteers to share out loud their self-reflections on a given topic. The ensuing discussion can serve to coach all students on the process of completing a self-assessment. It also provides the teacher with an indication of the students’ self-assessment abilities.

Example: In order to help students remember particularly challenging words or phrases, a teacher has them make their own lists of items on which they wish to focus. The teacher also designs additional guided reflective activities to encourage individual students or the class as a whole to reflect on the progress being made with learning items on the list. A class learning list may be compiled using entries from the lists created by individual students. Examining the lists as a class may help students develop a greater understanding of linguistic patterns or challenges presented by specific words or phrases.


Practices and instruments related to assessment of learning

All of the following assessment instruments will require a letter grade or numerical notation to be given, as these instruments assess cumulative learning.

PERFORMANCE TASKS (or PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TASKS or PROJECTS or RICH ASSESSMENT TASKS)

- ▶ refer to a wide range of activities in which students demonstrate their ability to use multiple skills.
- ▶ often involve more than one language skill; i.e., students may need to listen and speak and/or read and write in order to carry out the task successfully. It can involve any other combination of language skills.
- ▶ are often based on real-life uses of the language and therefore provide students with a meaningful context for real language use, possibly for an authentic audience.
- ▶ may consist of multiple smaller tasks pertaining to a specific theme or topic within a field of experience.

- ▶ can include simulations or the creation of specific products that have meaning to students beyond their use as part of an assessment process.
- ▶ allow students to create personal meaning.
- ▶ should be designed with the students' age, cultural background and level of cognitive and linguistic maturity in mind. They should be flexible enough and appropriate for every student in the classroom.
- ▶ can help students understand their progress in the development of language competency, if presented to students along with clear assessment instruments such as a well-developed rubric.
- ▶ are used with students who are familiar with processes related to planning for, carrying out, refining and reflecting on tasks. The type of assessment chosen should reflect the instructional approach used. Teachers who choose to assess student abilities using performance tasks ensure that their students understand clearly what is expected of them.
- ▶ require clear and unambiguous task directions and rubric descriptors. English may be used to ensure that all students have understood the directions and criteria since the purpose is to assess the product and not their comprehension of the instructions given.

 *Example:* A Grade 7 teacher is concluding a unit on the WEATHER. As a culminating task, students are to prepare a five-day forecast for radio/TV and newspaper and include a weather proverb that sums up the conditions for the upcoming week/month. The students work in groups, and the group's performance and products are assessed using rubrics, group assessment and self-reflection instruments.

Appendix U includes a checklist that teachers can use when developing their own performance assessment tasks.

FSL teachers may choose to make use of task development strategies sometimes used by teachers in other content areas, such as the RAFTS writing strategy (Holston and Santa 1985, pp. 456–457). In this instructional strategy, students are given indicators of the role (R), audience (A), format (F), topic (T) and a strong verb with which to start (S). For example, students might be told: You are a veterinarian [role]. Create a poster [format] addressed to people looking for a pet [audience] in which you plead [strong verb] with them to consider what it takes to have a family pet [topic]. Associated criteria are developed to assess the students' performance in the form of rubrics or criterion-referenced marks.

Teachers may find that it takes several tries and often many revisions over the course of a few years to develop performance assessment tasks that are truly valid and reliable when it comes to assessing student achievement accurately in relation to the outcomes of the program of studies. The performance assessment tasks should guide the planning and teaching of the entire unit rather than be developed as an afterthought.

PORTFOLIOS

- ▶ have been described in more detail in the previous section. They may also be used in assessment *of* learning, but in this case the contents of the portfolio are given a grade or mark.

QUIZZES

- ▶ are a brief way to check for learning on a few items that have been introduced and practised in class.
- ▶ may relate to a single, specific outcome or a few targeted outcomes.

RUBRICS or SCORING GUIDES

- ▶ are described in more detail in the section entitled “Practices and instruments related to assessment *for* learning.”
- ▶ may be designed for use with any of the three purposes of assessment.
- ▶ should be developed and shared with students prior to starting the performance task.
- ▶ can increase the consistency and reliability of scoring and, as a result, are often used to develop grades for reporting purposes.

TESTS or EXAMINATIONS

- ▶ are summative assessment instruments used to collect information about what students know and can do after a period of study.
- ▶ are generally used to assess several learning outcomes at one time. Outcomes related to the skills of reading and writing are generally easier to assess when using a pencil and paper test or examination format. Assessing outcomes related to listening and speaking requires more creativity on the part of the teacher designing the test or exam.
- ▶ have questions aligned with the outcomes from the program of studies in order to obtain valid results.

In summary

When planning for effective classroom assessment, teachers begin teaching with the end in mind. Teachers ask themselves which learning outcomes they intend to help students achieve, and then they teach to those outcomes. They assess before, during and after they have taught in order to develop and refine, on a continuous basis, the students’ ability to attain those outcomes.

While assessing, teachers share the intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria with students and find ways to involve students in the assessment process. They also ground assessment in contexts that are meaningful to students and that involve authentic uses of language.

In their planning, teachers decide on ways to employ a variety of assessment methods and purposes of assessment and to provide frequent and descriptive feedback to students. It is important that teachers demonstrate sensitivity to individual differences in this process. By doing so, teachers also develop ways to facilitate students' self-reflection and communication with others regarding their progress and achievement to date. The planning allows students to reflect on their goals for learning in addition to the next steps that need to be taken.

Teachers can also model how they themselves reflect on their learning in order to demonstrate to students how one can continue to develop knowledge and skills.

Chapter 9 provides a discussion of the use of technology in the FSL classroom.

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