

Strategies in Action: Assessment

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Kindergarten: English-instructed classroom with some newly-arrived and "Emerging Level" Multilingual Learners and some native English speakers.

Setting:

It is nearing the end of the Kindergarten thematic unit on Community Workers, and Ms. Dewan has prepared her class for their final [performance task assessment](#). She hoped they would be able to demonstrate the understanding that there are multiple workers who help their local community, and to be able to describe the work that various people do and their roles and responsibilities. She was looking both for mastery of content knowledge, and grasp of her language objectives around description. Because the class includes three recently arrived newcomers, five Multilingual Learners with some basic foundation in English, and 20 native English speakers, Ms. Dewan has differentiated the performance task to assess the language objectives of the unit at appropriate levels for her Multilingual Learners while assessing content knowledge as well. [The whole class had learned together about the sanitation worker](#) and the firefighter, and then children had been working in small "shared research" groups learning about one additional community worker they chose (e.g., school nurse, grocery store cashier, bus driver, etc.). For each community worker, children had researched their tools, clothing and uniforms, location, and how they help the community.

Lesson:

Performance Task differentiated for "Emerging Level" and "Bridging Level" Multilingual Learners

Today, Ms. Dewan will engage her students in the end-of-unit performance task. First, she draws her "Emerging Level" Multilingual Learners over to the poster they had put together about their community worker, and asks them to tell her about their community worker. To spark their language, she gives them an additional package of photos showing their community worker in action, and begins prompting them to talk about their community worker, providing support in the form of sentence frames, both written and verbal. Ms. Dewan watches and listens carefully as her students piece together their narrative about the worker. She is listening for key vocabulary, watching for their ability to respond to her questions/prompts by demonstrating understanding of the various dimensions characterizing their community workers through photos, pointing, and questions, and noting their use of descriptive language structures.

The "Bridging Level" Multilingual Learners, with more English proficiency, are also expected to describe a community worker and their role, but to do so through a more formal oral presentation. The sentence frames for description are on the wall as a resource, along with all of the posters and materials created throughout the unit. Students are encouraged to use those resources as support. For these students, Ms. Dewan pulls out the Oral Presentation Rubric, with dimensions well known to the students because they had worked on presentation skills throughout the unit as they constructed a class matrix of key content and concepts. The rubric includes various

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assessment dimensions such as eye contact, audible voice, use of visuals to add detail and to complement their oral presentation, use of “description” language structures and vocabulary (e.g., “characteristics,” “consists of,” “includes,” etc.), and key content-related concepts (e.g., “location,” “role,” “equipment and clothing”).

Later that evening, looking back on the performances, Ms. Dewan is pleased with the amount of content knowledge her students had learned, and she is proud they all were able to communicate and demonstrate that knowledge regardless of their level of English proficiency. Because she was looking closely at the English Language Development (ELD) standards and using the guidance there to differentiate her assessment based on her students’ proficiency levels, her students were all celebrated and felt successful as they demonstrated their knowledge. She also noted that many still had work to do on presenting audibly and projecting their voices. That would be something to work on in the next unit!

Reflection questions

1. What are the advantages of using a content-based performance task, like the one Ms. Dewan uses, to assess the English language proficiency skills of students? What assessment data is Ms. Dewan still missing about her Kindergarteners’ English language proficiency?
2. How might Ms. Dewan go about collecting additional assessment data? Since this is an English-instructed classroom, how can Ms. Dewan assess her students in their home language as well? What might this further assessment data tell her?
3. What is one takeaway that you can apply to your own practice in assessing Multilingual Learners?