A New Direction for Assessing English Learners in the Secondary Grades

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The purpose of this paper is to provide background for the vision statement, *An Argument-based Framework for Valid and Actionable Assessment for English Learners in Secondary Grades.* We begin by identifying the problem we intended to address in the vision statement for an assessment framework. This is followed by a discussion about the perspective on language development that underpins the assessment framework and its consequences for assessment. After a consideration of the assessment principles that guided the development of the framework, we propose an approach to assessment which should be the major focus for educators since it will be actionable for the everyday development of English Learners' potential. Finally, we suggest some possible new directions for accountability assessments.

What Problem We Are Aiming to Address?

In the United States, over one third (34.7%) of all English Learners are enrolled in the secondary grades (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018). Two thirds of secondary English Learners (65 percent) have been schooled entirely in the United States (NCES, 2018) and are often labeled "long-term," a reference to the length of time they have been enrolled in school

— more than six years — without meeting their state's achievement standards to be reclassified out of the English Learner subgroup. Labels can be damaging (e.g., Brooks, 2018; Kibler & Valdés, 2016; Paris, 2012; Rosa, 2019; Umansky, & Dumont, 2021) and potentially lead to negative consequences for students. For instance, based on the mistaken belief that English proficiency is a necessary precondition to engage in rigorous grade-level learning, students classified as English Learners often do not have access to the core curriculum and demanding learning opportunities (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; Glick & Walqui, 2021; Johnson, 2019) and are frequently excluded from grade-level content courses altogether (Umansky, 2016). Assessment data reveal the adverse impact of this domino effect of lost opportunities. For example, data from the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show a difference of 33 percentage points in reading proficiency between non–English Learners and students currently labeled as English Learners in eighth grade (38 percent non-English Learners versus 5 percent) and a difference of 30 percentage points in mathematics (36 percent non-English Learners versus 6 percent EL) (NCES, 2018). As a consequence, their performance on other indicators such as ACT participation and postsecondary enrollment is adversely impacted (Carlson & Knowles, 2016). The magnitude of this achievement lag is untenable from the perspective of educational equity.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), educational equity has two dimensions: fairness and inclusion (OECD, 2012). **Fairness** means ensuring that personal and social circumstances — for instance, gender, socioeconomic status, and language status — are not obstacles to educational achievement. **Inclusion** means setting a basic minimum standard for education that is shared by all students, irrespective of background or personal characteristics. In this regard, all students in the United States are expected to meet the achievement standards that have been adopted by each state and to have equitable learning opportunities in order to reach them.

To this end, it is essential that English Learners have access to, and engagement with, challenging and rigorous content learning that is required to meet state standards and that teaching and learning support both high levels of content and analytic learning and the development of language resources needed to learn that content. Realizing equity requires understanding each student's needs and designing learning experiences that will help all English Learners — and all means each one — to achieve success. Assessment must play its part in providing information that will support educators to engage in ongoing practices that are likely to lead to positive outcomes for every English Learner.

In the next section, we describe the perspective on language development that underpins our approach to assessment system design and evaluation.

Perspective on Language Development

Language is a complex, nonlinear, adaptive system from which "the behavior of the whole emerges out of the interaction of its parts" (Larsen-Freeman, 1997, p. 157). From this stance, the interactions between an individual's patterns of experience, social interactions, and cognitive processes lead to emergence of new language structures and uses (Beckner et al., 2009). Consistent with this viewpoint, English Learners need opportunities in the classroom to develop situated language competencies during interactions with peers and teachers while simultaneously learning academic content in the course of a lesson (Bailey & Durán, 2020). Students' capacity to use new language adds to the already valuable language resources that they bring to school from their community and their lived experiences and enables them to participate in a broad range of academic contexts in the classroom (Haneda, 2017; Walqui & Bunch, 2019).

This perspective on language development has its roots in Vygotsky's theory of the relationship between language and thought (e.g., 1978). Vygotsky maintained that thought is not merely expressed in words, it comes "into existence through them" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 218). In this vein, he argued that the development and functioning of higher mental processes (cognition) are mediated and that language is one of the most important mediating tools that humans have at their disposal (Swain, 2006). Language as a mediating tool is used in interaction with others and with oneself (through inner speech) and results in the creation and use of higher mental processes (van Lier, 2004; Swain & Lapkin, 2011).

The term "languaging" refers to the activity of mediating cognitively complex ideas using language (Swain, 2006). Languaging characterizes "language as a process (verb) rather than a product (noun)" (Swain & Lapkin, 2011, p. 105). It places the focus for language development on producing language, underscoring that when people produce language they are engaging in cognitive activity; languaging is the dynamic, ever-developing process of using language with increasingly more autonomy and dexterity to make meaning (Swain, 2006).

Our perspective on language development incorporates three additional concepts that are hallmarks of classroom practice for English Learners: apprenticeship, the ZPD, and scaffolding. **Apprenticeship** operationalizes Vygotsky's emphasis on the interrelated roles of the individual and the social world. Apprenticeship occurs in community activity and involves active individuals participating with others in "culturally organized activity that has as part of its purpose the development of mature participation in the activity by the less experienced people" (Rogoff, 1995, p. 143). In the case of English Learners, they are apprenticed into the language and make sense of concepts. For example, a class with English Learners is being introduced to the genre of narrative. The teacher alerts them to the purpose of narratives, to entertain and teach lessons, and to its typical sequence: a setting and a character are introduced, the character is portrayed as possessing certain characteristics, then something happens to the character and the resolution to the situation changes the character. She also introduces students to the kind

of expressions that move the action forward: *once upon a time, one day, suddenly, after that, and then.* After reading and discussing these elements in a narrative, students are asked to create their own narratives. The teacher does not expect perfectly constructed narratives at once. However, as narratives are explored, student products are assessed by teachers, peers, and self, and new narratives are written, each time, the students' products get increasingly better (Walqui & Bunch, 2019).

This example highlights the concept of the ZPD, which also originates with Vygotsky and is defined as the distance between what the individual can accomplish during independent problem-solving and the level of problem-solving that can be achieved with the assistance of adult or in collaboration with a more expert peer (Vygotsky, 1978). As the term implies, Vygotsky conceived of the ZPD in the context of the broad maturation of the individual's developmental structures (Chaiklin, 2005) to describe the current level of development and the potential next attainable step. In his discussion of the importance of the ZPD for education, Vygotsky (1978) identified learners' emerging abilities and those that are not in the horizon as the appropriate target for instructional efforts to guide development (Levi & Poehner, 2018). In the previous example, having been inducted into narratives, the students understand their social purpose and structure. Gradually, as students are supported to grow in community, they appropriate the ability to construct narratives. Furthermore, their knowledge is generative; they will apply it time and time again in future activity. In this way, creating contexts for linguistic and academic learning in the ZPD

occurs in part through the scaffolding of social interaction (Walqui, 2006).

According to Jerome Bruner, **scaffolding** is

> a process of 'setting up' the situation to make the child's entry easy and successful and then gradually pulling back and handing the role to the child as he becomes skilled enough to manage it. (Bruner, 1983, p. 60)

As Walqui (2006) points out, from this definition we can understand that scaffolding has a more or less constant ritual structure (though flexible) and an interactional process that is jointly constructed from moment to moment and which occurs in the student's ZPD. Building on this view, Walqui goes further to represent scaffolding as three pedagogical "scales":

- macro-scaffolding 1 — planned curriculum progression over time (e.g., a series of tasks over time, a project, a classroom ritual)

- meso-scaffolding 2 — the procedures used in a particular activity (an instantiation of Scaffolding 1)

- micro-scaffolding 3 — the collaborative process of interaction (the process of

- achieving Scaffolding 2) (Walqui, 2006, p. 164)

The clear implication for the assessment framework from the perspective on language is that language and content learning are not treated as separate entities. Learning disciplinary concepts and analytical practices is not distinct from the linguistic means through which the understanding is developed and expressed; the demands of understanding concepts,

practices, and relationships are not privileged above the demands of linguistic resources, nor vice versa. Building with their existing language resources and through apprenticeship and scaffolding within the ZPD of the features of language that are needed to construe meaning, English Learners develop and use new language resources as they make meaning of content (Walqui & Heritage, 2011).

It is important to note that this perspective on language development does not conceptualize English Learners as a homogeneous group but rather recognizes the heterogeneity of language development among them. No two students' language development progresses in the same way or at the same pace, nor is language learned by moving students through discrete stages in lockstep progression (Valdés & Castellón, 2010). In this regard, large-scale assessments that are intended to be administered to widespread student populations, during some common period of necessarily limited duration, will not provide scores that

will be both comparable across jurisdictions and useful for guiding instructional decisions (Mosher & Heritage, 2017). Assessment solutions for English Learners will need to address the variation in students' language development in order to support teachers in taking contingent action in response to individual students' utterances and written contributions (Walqui, 2006). Furthermore, there are consequential validity concerns with respect to the use of summative assessment data if they take a central role in guiding instructional practices, thus inhibiting effective pedagogy (cf. Black, Wilson, & Yao, 2011).

Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of effective pedagogy that follow from our perspective on language development and contrasts it with traditional pedagogical practices for English Learners. Assessment solutions will need to provide information to both teachers and students that supports rather than impedes these pedagogical practices.

Table 1. Changes in Language and Content Teaching (Heritage, Walqui, & Linquanti, 2015)

FROM . . .	TO . . .
Seeing language acquisition as an individual process	Understanding it as a social process of apprenticeship
Conceptualizing language in terms of structures or functions	Understanding language as action
Seeing language acquisition as a linear and progressive process aimed at accuracy, fluency, and complexity	Understanding that acquisition occurs in nonlinear and complex ways
Emphasizing discrete structural features of language	Showing how language is purposeful and patterned
Using lessons focused on individual ideas or texts	Using clusters of lessons centered on texts that are interconnected by purpose or by theme
Engaging in activities that pre-teach content	Engaging in activities that scaffold students' development and autonomy as learners with the ZPD
Establishing separate objectives for language and content learning	Establishing objectives that integrate language and content learning
Using simple or simplified texts	Using complex, amplified texts
Teaching traditional grammar	Teaching multimodal grammar

To see these changes in language and content teaching, please refer to Appendix A for a scenario that highlights them in practice.

Current Assessment of English Learners

Currently, the formal assessment experiences of English Learners (and, indeed, most if not all K-12 students in the United States) are dominated by large-scale, year-end assessments (Volante et al., 2020; Gordon, 2020). These assessments are designed to support accountability reporting and decision-making but in practice are used for a variety of other purposes, including placement, classification, and accountability classification and reclassification even when little to no evidence supports these uses (Umansky & Porter, 2020). While the current system does include other forms of assessment, such as benchmark assessments or unit tests, many of them that are selected are developed or selected primarily for their perceived relevance to large-scale assessments (Volante et al., 2020).

However, large-scale assessments reveal little about students' responses in the context of classroom learning and have limited utility for the purpose of supporting language and content learning (Bailey & Durán, 2020). The

validity of any assessment is prejudiced if it reinforces approaches to teaching which are inappropriate for the specified educational goals (Black, 1993). In this regard, the validity of current standardized assessments is prejudiced on the grounds that they can reinforce teaching practices that isolate language from content and analysis, which often means segregating English Learners from their non-English Learner peers, thereby removing important contextual factors that are critical to students' development of content knowledge. In the case of English Learners, the goal is to acquire additional language and content simultaneously by responding to "affordances" emerging from dynamic communicative situations (van Lier, 2000, 2004; van Lier & Walqui, 2012). For this reason, and in light of our perspective on language development described above, assessment of English Learners needs to reflect the nature of the learning context and students' experience in learning content and language simultaneously. A further validity concern in assessment for English Learners, who are both a linguistically and culturally heterogeneous group, is their interpretation of the assessment items that are potentially insensitive to the students' backgrounds (e.g., Solano-Flores, 2006). Both the social and cultural nature of learning suggest the need for new ways to assess English Learners beyond traditional means such as standardized assessments (Durán, 2008).

Drawing from Gordon et al. (2013), we propose that assessment be designed into teaching to advance language and content learning such that it is characterized by the following:

- Assessment opportunities are designed into teaching and learning and occur in the ongoing flow of activity and interactions in the classroom (this characteristic echoes Richard Shavelson and colleagues' observation, "A good assessment makes a good teaching activity, and a good teaching activity makes a good assessment") (Shavelson, Baxter, & Pine, 1992, p. 22).

- Assessment evidence derived from the learning tasks, activities, and interactions in the lesson provides information to **both** teachers and students that informs immediate or near immediate teaching and learning.

- It probes for the status of learning relative to disciplinary content and analytical practices and to the emergence of language that make meaning of content and practices.

- It supports students' metacognitive thinking and metalinguistic awareness and, in turn, metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness supports development.

When assessment practices reflect these characteristics, teachers and students have up-to-the-minute information to respond to student learning as it is unfolding (Heritage & Wylie, 2020). Such practices also allow for more individualized assessment opportunities and information. We noted earlier that English Learners do not move in lockstep at the same pace and in the same way. With a steady stream of information from these assessment practices, teachers can personalize classroom structures in which teaching is tailored to students within their ZPD, enabling each one to expand their individual competencies from where they are currently in learning to where they can go next.

Effectively designing classroom assessment for English Learners is dependent on teachers' disciplinary knowledge, including pedagogical content knowledge, and on their knowledge of language development. Knowing how a specific discipline is structured, the methods of inquiry used, and the reasoning that the discipline's respective method requires are important components of teachers' disciplinary knowledge (Heritage & Wylie, 2020). Pedagogical content knowledge is "the special amalgam between content and pedagogy" (Shulman, 1987, p. 7) required for teaching a particular subject. Shulman proposed that it is not enough for teachers to know the "what" of the discipline — how it is structured and so on, but also the "how" — effective ways to teach the discipline. Knowing the "how" also involves understanding the growth and development of students' thinking about important ideas in the discipline (NRC, 2000). In the case of English Learners, the "how" of teaching also entails providing learning opportunities which enable students to develop and use new language resources as they learn content. In turn, teachers require knowledge of the language needed to make meaning of concepts and practices in the discipline. As these ideas make clear, the success of an assessment approach is dependent on teachers receiving the support, professional learning, and expertise needed to replace standardized assessments as the foundation of information about student knowledge and skills and powerful ways of using language in the content areas. In the following section, we describe our vision for such an approach.

A New Design: Inverting the Pyramid for a Comprehensive Assessment System

As a consequence of their high stakes, large-scale assessment has tended to dominate the assessment arena for many years, including during periods of extensive reform (for example, the introduction of college- and career-ready standards, when considerable efforts were made to improve external accountability assessments). Concerns have been raised about the top-down nature of assessment in the United States, with calls for a more bottom-up approach that places greater and prioritized emphasis on assessment for the purpose of informing and improving learning and the teaching processes that enable learning (Bailey & Durán, 2020; Gordon, Gordon, Aber, & Berliner, 2013; Wilson, 2018[1]). This is not to say that we do not recognize that accountability measures have a place in the assessment system as a means to obtain a picture of the educational landscape. Until we have effective alternative methods of assessing the outcomes of learning in the interest of accountability, current large-scale assessments will continue to be used for this purpose (Gordon, et al., 2013).

As a significant step in this direction, we have adopted the novel approach of inverting that assessment system to privilege assessments at the classroom level that inform ongoing teaching and learning for English Learners as the drivers of assessment types and uses.

[1] Mark Wilson's Presidential Address at the National Council of Measurement in Education [NCME], 2017, later published as Wilson, 2018. It is noteworthy that subsequent to this address, a subgroup of the NCME, The Classroom Assessment Task Force, was established to promote classroom assessment in rebalancing efforts.

Figure 1 shows the current system with the dominance of large-scale standardized assessments, which both overwhelm and press on the design of classroom-based assessments.

In Figure 2, classroom assessment is the driver of large-scale standardized assessment, with the potential of ultimately enabling improved synergy between them and classroom-based assessments (cf. Wilson, 2018).

This inversion represents an approach to assessment that addresses the current problem of limited access to rigorous content for English Learners and the consequential impact of their poor performance on large-scale assessments. We have developed an argument-based framework[2] intended to guide the development and implementation of a learning-centered **comprehensive assessment system** (CAS): a "comprehensive set of means for eliciting evidence of student performance" (NRC, 2001 p. 20) to support decision-making for a variety of different users. The overall goal of the CAS is to reflect the nature of the learning contexts and the students' backgrounds in assessment to support equal opportunities to learn and to achieve for secondary English Learners. Our CAS is based on the following assessment principles:

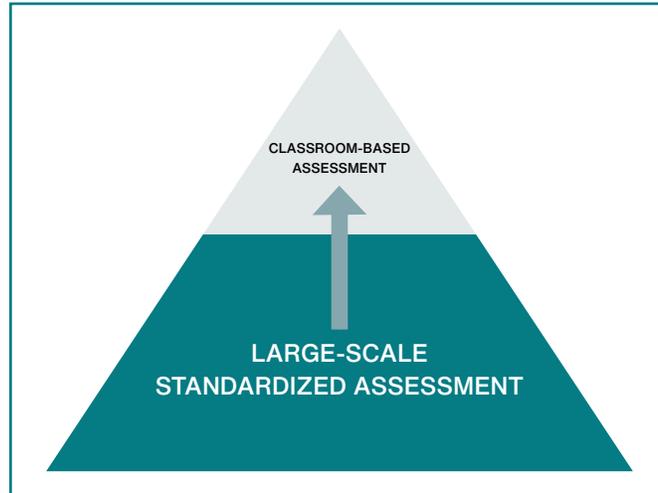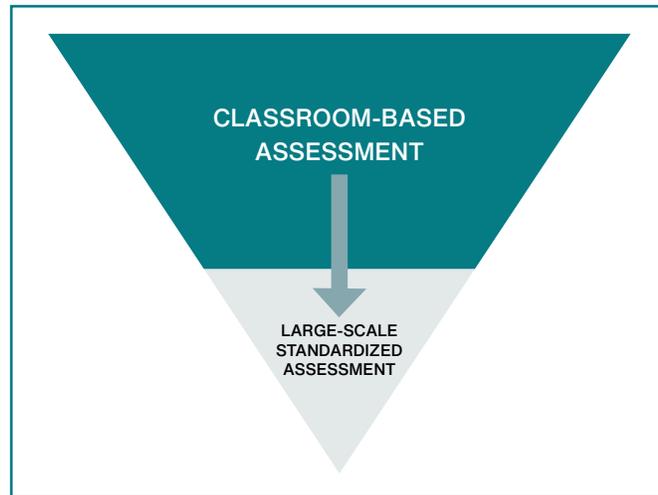Figure 1. Dominance of Large-Scale Standardized Assessment

Figure 2. Classroom-Based Assessment as the Driver

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[2] The development of this framework draws on Kane's (2006, 2013) structure for an argument-based approach to validity in order to delineate the evidence that needs to be accumulated and evaluated for valid interpretations and uses of the information yielded by the assessments included in the framework.

1. **Focuses on the learner and learning:** Assessment provides insights into each student's thinking, skills, and language development. Assessment is aligned to high-quality classroom learning, consistent with Table 1, it provides all students with the opportunity to show where they are in their learning through multiple modalities, and reflects meaningful, worthwhile tasks that challenge the upper reaches of students' language competence and conceptual understanding.

2. **Emphasizes rigorous learning:** Assessment focuses on the concepts, knowledge, language, and analytical practices inherent in academic content standards. Assessment reflects high-quality classroom learning experiences characterized by apprenticeship, interaction, and scaffolding within the students' zone of proximal development (ZPD) that promote deep, interconnected understandings and the language to express them.

3. **Produces actionable information for the user:** Information is asset- and future-oriented, focusing on what students can do in terms of content and language as well as highlighting areas of need and potential growth. Information yielded is tractable for teaching and learning.

4. **Supports metacognition and self-regulation:** Assessment provides information that supports the ongoing development of students' metacognitive thinking about their learning (both their thinking processes and their language use), their achievement, and their approaches to learning, which, in turn, enables them to proactively orient their actions to achieving goals.

5. **Promotes self-efficacy and learner identity:** Assessment is designed with multiple entry points so that all students are able to show what they know and what they can do with language, giving students a sense of accomplishment and helping them enhance their feelings of self-efficacy and build positive learner identities.

In the next section, we elaborate on the assessment principles that anchor the CAS in support of effective pedagogy for English Learners in the secondary grades. While this framework and its underlying principles would be useful for all teachers and students, it foregrounds the specific need for English Learners to acquire content and language simultaneously.

A Snapshot of the CAS

Just as a one-size-fits-all pedagogy does not meet the learning needs of all students, no single assessment can accomplish all assessment purposes. By way of a snapshot of the CAS, Table 2 shows the potential range of users and the purposes and possible methods of assessment within the system. A discussion of each assessment type follows.

Table 2. Assessments and Users in a Comprehensive System

TYPE	USER	PURPOSE	METHOD	INFORMATION
Formative Assessment-designed into ongoing teaching and learning	Teachers and students	Inform ongoing teaching and learning	• Observation of class-room discourse/ students engaged in instructional tasks • Analysis of student work • Student peer and self-assessment • Metacognitive moni-toring relative to goals	• Emerging, partially formed language/ understanding • Current learning status relative to lesson goals • Any difficulties, misconceptions
Classroom summative at the end of a learning episode or thematic series of lessons	Teachers, students, parents, school-level administrators	Evaluate learning relative to medium-term goals	• Student work products and performances (e.g., portfolio), with associ-ated rubric(s) • Student self-assess-ment and evaluative reflection • Classroom summative assessments designed/ selected by teacher(s)	• Cumulative record of learning • Status of student learning relative to medium-term goals (e.g., unit) • Student strengths and needs
Classroom summative at the end of course, semester/year	Teachers, students, parents, school and district administrators	Evaluate learning relative to long-term goals	• Student work products and performances (e.g., portfolio), with associ-ated rubric(s) • Student self-assess-ment and evaluative reflection • Classroom summative assessments designed/ selected by teacher(s)	• Cumulative record of learning • Status of student learning relative to longer term goals • Student strengths and needs
External large-scale summative at the end of the year	Teachers, students, parents, school, district and state administrators	Federal accountability Evaluate systemic programs Inform systemic planning	• Large-scale standard-ized assessment	• Achievement relative to end-of-year state standards

Formative Assessment Designed into Ongoing Teaching and Learning

Formative assessment is the term used to refer to a range of practices that teachers design into a lesson. These practices involve teachers and students in obtaining evidence of learning while students are in the process of developing concepts, analytical practices, and language and then taking evidence-based action to advance students' learning. Formative assessment practices include communicating or co-creating with students lesson-size learning goals (one or more class periods) and success criteria, eliciting evidence through the interactions, tasks, and activities of the lesson, feedback, and self- and peer assessment.

Classroom Summative Assessment

There are two types of classroom summative assessment in the system: 1) for use at the end of a thematic series of lessons, and 2) for use at the end of a course or year. Important considerations for both types of classroom summative assessment are that they need to

- be clearly aligned to standards and goals that they address,

- fully represent the construct of interest and all the important dimensions of the construct,

- embody high-quality learning experiences,

- integrate content and language,

- reflect students' own culture and lived experiences,

- permit all students to show what they know and what they can do with language; and

- be reliable in the sense that there is "sufficiency of information" to make a judgment (Smith, 2003, p. 30) and that the results are replicable on multiple administrations.

Assessment at the End of a Thematic Series of Lessons or a Unit

The purpose of this type of classroom summative assessment for English Learners is to ascertain the students' learning status at the end of a thematic series of lessons or a unit. It answers the question "what have the students learned to date?" With the information gained from classroom summative assessment, the teacher is able update her understanding of student learning relative to her medium-term goals (e.g., unit). With an understanding of students' strengths and needs in academic content and language usage, the teacher may adjust future plans to clear up persistent misconceptions and determine opportunities to revisit content or language that students may need further support within subsequent units.

Assessment at the End of Course or Year

The purpose of this type of classroom summative assessment for English Learners is to ascertain the achievement of students at the end of a course or a year relative to course objectives or state standards. Individual teachers can use the assessment results to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching and make plans about any changes or improvements that are needed. Teachers, school and district administrators can examine patterns of achievement across classrooms and grades to inform decisions about policies, programs, and resources in relation to English Learners. The results of these assessments can also be reported to students and parents/guardians to inform future plans for

continued and optimal support for the students (e.g., classification and reclassification).

Performance Assessments/Portfolios
The system also includes student portfolios, an intentional collection of student work samples, for example, written work, graphic representations, audio recordings, videos of interaction, student self-evaluations, and goal statements that reflect student progress. Portfolios would have both a formative and summative function. Formative in the sense that improvement-oriented action could be taken with respect to students' strengths and needs revealed by the accumulation of evidence, and summative by serving as a summary of what students know, understand, and can do as a means to make an evaluation of student progress and achievement to date. Summative data, for instance at the end of a unit, could also be obtained through the use of specific assessments either designed or selected by teachers or by teachers and students together.

In our conception of portfolios, students would be primarily responsible, with teacher guidance, for selecting work samples against specific criteria. Effective portfolios should be a planned, organized collection of student work and

- include a selection of items that are representative of curricular outcomes and of what the student(s) knows and can do;

- include selections that show student's command of multimodally communicating knowledge and expertise to others;

- document learning in a variety of ways — process, product, growth, and achievement;

- help students, teachers, and administrators examine their progress;

- help students develop a positive self-concept as learners;

- provide detailed information about student learning and achievement;

- serve as a guide for future learning;

- include student self-assessments/evaluative reflections;

- support the assessment, evaluation, and communication of student learning; and

- be shared with parents or caregivers (Alberta Education, 2008).

A scoring guide, rubric, or other set of criteria on which to evaluate student learning and achievement would accompany a portfolio, which both teachers and students could use jointly to examine progress and achievement.

An advantage of a student portfolio is that assessment can be aligned to and reflective of contemporaneous teaching and learning and can provide information on the more contextualized and process-oriented aspects of content and language development. In this way, teaching, learning, and assessment inform and build on one another in a dynamic, reciprocal relationship. Such reciprocity can be maintained as portfolios are used to assess different timeframes of learning, ranging from the end-of-learning episode or thematic series of lessons to the end of a course, semester, or year.

A portfolio could also be cross-sectional to demonstrate the range of performance of a group of students. For this purpose, a teacher would put together a portfolio that represents the progress and achievement of the entire class rather than of just a specific student.

Portfolio assessment is also dependent on teachers' disciplinary knowledge and instructional skills if it is to fully reflect, over an extended period of time, the language competencies English Learners developed during interactions with peers and teachers while simultaneously learning academic content. Additionally, teachers will need the skills necessary to support student selections of portfolio items that illustrate the development of these competencies as well as the skills to interpret the collection of evidence in terms of what it shows about individual or groups of students' short- and long-term progress.

The creation of rubrics to accompany a portfolio is a nontrivial task. A rubric describes desirable qualities in student work as well as common pitfalls. They orient teachers and students toward learning goals and are used to guide feedback on progress and judge the degree to which goals are met. A rubric is not exempt from the demands of validity and reliability; it needs to be aligned to the goals of learning academic content and language and should result in similar judgments when used by different people (Andrade, 2005). Teachers will need the necessary knowledge and skills or external support to create and apply useful rubrics for portfolio assessment.

Student Self-Assessment and Evaluative Reflection

In the CAS, students play an active role in assessment through opportunities for self-assessment of and evaluative reflection on both language and content learning. Students' own assessment can support self-regulated learning, the ability to proactively orient actions to achieving one's goals (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). Researchers have found that when students are involved in self-regulatory processes, they are more engaged in learning and reach higher levels of achievement (Andrade & Heritage, 2018). Self-regulation is not only important for learning in school, but it is just as important to the development of life-long learning skills that will have purchase for students as they enter college and the workplace (OECD & Center for Educational Research and Innovation, 2008).

Self-assessment involves students in metacognitive monitoring while they are learning and has been termed "the gateway to regulating one's own learning" (Winne & Perry, 2000, p. 540). When students are engaged in metacognitive monitoring, they are aware of how their learning is progressing and can make adjustments along the way to reach intended goals. In the proposed system, self-assessment and metacognitive monitoring will be a key feature of assessment embedded into ongoing teaching and learning.

Evaluative reflection and its expression in language in practice is also central to self-regulation and involves students in examining their performances — for example, their uses of the target language while carrying out communicative tasks — and critically considering difficulties or shortcomings that need to be either addressed or revised in the future (Levi & Poehner, 2018). Poehner (2012) observed that evaluative reflection on performance was "simultaneously a condition for and consequence of development" (p. 620). As students compile a portfolio to assess medium- and long-term goals, they would be provided with structured occasions — for example, time in the lesson to use protocols, rubrics or surveys — to assist them in reflecting on their learning, making evaluative judgments about their progress, and what aspects of learning may need to be attended to further or

revised in future learning. Teacher and student would discuss their independent evaluations to arrive at a joint decision about the level of the student achievement and future directions.

Designing and selecting appropriate assessments is dependent on teachers' assessment literacy, defined as an understanding of the basic assessment concepts and procedures likely to influence educational decisions. Many teachers have not received training in assessment literacy, nor have they been trained to design assessments (Popham, 2018). A caution for use of classroom assessments for summative purposes is to ensure that teachers have sufficiently detailed guidance on which to base either the development or selection of assessments of both content and language development that reflect the criteria listed above.

External Large-Scale Assessments

Large-scale assessments are used for purposes of accountability and provide information to the state about the degree to which local districts and schools are meeting achievement goals (i.e., the state standards). They are constructed to produce scores from which accurate inferences about how aggregate groups of students have mastered the content reflected in the specifications for the assessment can be made. The scores are comparable across jurisdictions.

Mosher and Heritage (2017) argue that the "goal of comparability, along with time and cost constraints, drive one toward using psychometric models that are measuring relatively stable traits" and that "using measures that tend to be weighted toward relatively unchanging attributes to assess the outcomes of instruction is inappropriate" (p. 61). Adding to these

limitations, in the case of English Learners, to make valid inferences about performance based on the assessment score, the assessments assume homogeneity of the group being assessed in terms of the same access to the learning of the assessment content and in the students' experiences and backgrounds. This is an assumption which is not met with English Learners, in particular (Bailey & Durán, 2020). The different levels of English language proficiency in the assessed group will also make drawing inferences about performance challenging (Bailey, personal communication).

Furthermore, English Learners' proficiency in a subject may not be adequately captured by one-dimensional constructs of academic competence operationalized by these assessments. At best, they can only provide "thin coverage" of what students know and can do (Durán, 2008).

Aggregated Performance Data

While our inverted system emphasizes classroom-based assessment and teachers' use of individual-level assessment, aggregated student learning and performance data is often required for decision-making. Currently, standardized achievement tests, which administer the same items to all English Learners and produce scores that represent student achievement with respect to the content of those shared stimuli, are used to produce summary information. Our framework proposes alternative ways of accomplishing this type of aggregation. For example, a teacher may summarize her classroom's achievement by selecting samples of student work using a rubric as a guide on what to look for or select with respect to English

Learners' use of language and ability to participate in disciplinary learning as individuals and with peers. A district leader may use this type of classroom-level information from multiple teachers within a school to make a judgment about whether the school as a whole would benefit from targeted professional learning to support teacher teams in designing rigorous and inclusive learning opportunities for English Learners throughout the school. Both examples illustrate processes in which users implement highly individualized assessment practices and then use principled decision rules or rubrics to systematically rate or combine data from individual sources.

New Directions for Accountability Assessments?

We have suggested that current accountability assessments will be part of the assessment landscape for some time to come. In this regard, it is instructive to note that a report of the Gordon Commission on the Future of Assessment in Education, in favoring assessment designed into teaching and learning and "controlled by the learning and teaching persons" as advanced above, has an interesting reflection on assessment for accountability purposes. The authors propose that those who are responsible for using assessment data for the purposes of accountability "could well be directed to distill from rich records of the assessment-teaching-learning transactions, such measurement data that may be needed for that purpose" (Gordon et al., 2013, p. 25). Our hope is that the CAS represents a step toward compiling rich records of assessment-teaching-learning transactions that could ultimately be used for purposes beyond the classroom.

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Appendix A

To illustrate how the proposed assessment types might operate within a CAS, we provide a scenario below that draws from a unit of study, Persuasion Across Time and Space (Walqui et al., 2012), published by Understanding Language, Stanford University. This scenario also highlights characteristics of effective pedagogy that follow from our perspective on language development, shown in Table 1.

Assessment Use Scenario

The students are engaged in a unit of study focused on seventh- and eighth-grade college- and career-ready standards that address Reading Informational Texts and Writing Arguments. There are five thematically and conceptually linked lessons (each lesson covers several class periods) in the unit.

> Using clusters of lessons centered on texts that are interconnected by purpose or by theme

Consistent with our language perspective discussed above, the unit as a whole, and each lesson individually includes apprenticeship experiences in which students' learning is differentially scaffolded according to their individual needs. For example, when building background knowledge of the period in preparation for reading the Gettysburg Address, students who need minimal scaffolding work both individually and in heterogeneous groups of three to review, answer questions about documents and photographs, and independently complete a *Background Reading Focus Chart.* For those who need maximum scaffolding, the teacher reads each text aloud, stopping at key points and asking students to talk to a partner about whether they could enter information into their *Background Reading Focus Chart* and what information that might be.

> Engaging in activities that scaffold students' development and autonomy as learners with the ZPD
>
> Using complex, amplified texts

The teacher had access to the students' scores from the state assessments administered at the end of the previous grade level, which indicated that there was a considerable range of performance among her students related to the standards the unit was intended to address. To obtain a more detailed picture of the students' learning status, the teacher asked the students to write a persuasive text. The students were given the following criteria on which their texts would be assessed:

> Establishing objectives that integrate language and content learning

- Create a strong opening that makes your reader care about your ideas.

- Develop a clearly stated opinion that is easy for readers to understand.

- Provide strong evidence and reasoning to support your opinion.

- Present your ideas in an organized way.

- Use language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose.

After writing a first draft from a stimulus, the students reviewed a partner's essay in relation to the criteria and then provided feedback about what the partner had done well and how the writing could be improved. The students were given an opportunity to revise their essay based on the feedback and to note how they had used the feedback. The teacher then reviewed the students' written work and made notes about the class's performance overall in terms of strengths and needs and about specific students who were going to require more scaffolding in order to access the content of the lessons.

In the first part of the unit, students analyzed multimedia advertisements, a type of persuasive text that was familiar to them, in terms of how arguments and appeals were framed. During the course of the lesson, there were many formative assessment opportunities embedded in the tasks and interactions from which the teacher could obtain evidence of the current status of students' reading, language, and analytic skills. For instance, in small groups, students were invited to examine individually two advertisements — one in print and the other a video — and then in discussion with their peers compare how the advertisements engaged the reader or viewer and tried to persuade them to take particular action. As the students were involved in discussion, the teacher listened carefully for evidence of the discursive language they were using to make meaning of the ideas they were grappling with, as well as for the level of their analytic thinking.

Understanding language as a social process of apprenticeship — students are learning language while they are engaged in interactions with others about persuasive text; they have models available that they can emulate

Understanding that language acquisition occurs in nonlinear and complex ways — students are using language to engage in discussion without either simplifications of the language they use or a focus on accuracy and fluency

Understanding language as action, in this case how to use language as a persuasive device

Teaching multimodal grammar — comparison of persuasion in two modes: print and video

To advance both language and thinking, the teacher intervened based on her evidence with prompts such as "could you clarify what you mean by..." or feedback such as "you've clearly identified some on-the-surface techniques that the author uses. Now can you go deeper, below the surface, and think about some of the implicit messages the author is trying to convey?" or questions like "How

could you connect Olivia and Diego's ideas?" Each group was asked to share their ideas with the class, which the teacher used as a catalyst to propel further discussion and to obtain more evidence that she could act on during the moment or use to inform plans for the next class period. At the lesson's conclusion, students were asked to complete a written reflection about what they thought they had learned about persuasive techniques, which the teacher also used as evidence of their learning for her own planning purposes.

The students maintained a portfolio throughout the unit. Their pre-unit assessment of persuasive writing was the first sample to be included, and at the end of the lesson on multimedia advertisements students were asked to select samples of their work to add to their portfolios. The criteria that guided their selections were the following:

- Select three piece(s) of work (written, images, audio) that show how your understanding of how advertisements achieve their communicative purposes has developed over the lessons.

- Write an explanation for why you selected each one.

- What did you find most challenging in this work? What are you most proud of? Why?

Before finalizing their selections, the students met with their portfolio partners to review available work samples and obtain feedback on their proposed selections. For instance, peer feedback focused on how well the work reflected the learning goal, the degree to which the samples showed the development of understanding, and the content and quality of their partners' explanations for selection. Once the samples were uploaded, the teacher reviewed each student's portfolio and made her own notes about the students' progress and any specific aspects of students' understanding that she needed to develop further as the unit progressed. She recorded audio feedback for students about their selections and the progress they showed, underscoring what they had learned, and what they needed to think about more as the unit moved into the next phase.

As the unit developed, the teacher continued to use what students said, did, made, or wrote during each lesson as embedded formative assessment opportunities. With the evidence obtained, she could engage in contingent teaching, supporting students to continuously advance their learning from where they were to where they could go next. After each lesson, the students selected items for their portfolios, guided by specific criteria, and provided reasons for their selections. They also reflected on their challenges and what they felt most proud of. The teacher made notes and offered feedback to the students about what their selections showed about both language and content learning, with pointers about what to pay attention to as they continued the unit.

At the end of the unit, students were invited to review the content of their portfolios for the unit and respond on a four-point Likert scale to questions related to the goals of the unit — for example, "I have a good understanding of the purpose and structure of persuasive texts;" "I

Showing how language is purposeful and patterned

Understanding language as action

have a good understanding of the techniques that authors use to communicate their claims and appeals;" "I am able to use English to convey my ideas to my teacher and my peers." Students were also asked to respond to the prompt, "I think I need to learn more about . . ." and also to the questions, "What have I learned about myself as a student through this unit?" and "What do I need to work on to improve my learning processes?"

Finally, the students were asked to write a persuasive text in response to particular stimuli. Prior to writing and using what the students had learned across the unit, the teacher and students co-created a rubric for the orig-inal persuasive writing criteria that reflected gradations of quality (see Andrade, 2000, for a discussion of this process). They analyzed models of well-crafted persuasive essays to develop the criteria. Models of what is expected are essential to student apprenticeship.

> Students are apprenticed to the discipline as they engage in writing a persuasive text — i.e., they are acquiring language and knowledge of the genre as writers

Individually, the students scored their pre-unit assessment and, after the end-of-unit writing task, they used it to score this piece of writing. The teacher also scored the students' work. Any major scoring discrepancies were resolved through teacher-student conferences; students could also request a teacher conference about the scoring, and the teacher invited some students to talk to her about their scores if they had either scored themselves too high or too low relative to the teacher's scores.

As a result of the assessment approaches the teacher and students used during the unit, they had evidence of learning day by day that they could act on to keep learning moving forward, they had a record of student progress via the portfolio along with input from students about their own learning, and they identified areas related to the standards that needed to be revisited in future units of study.

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