

PBLA PRACTICE REVIEW FRAMEWORK PILOT

Final Report

The PBLA Practice Review Framework supports PBLA implementation and is consistent with the PBLA approach to language learning and assessment, and with practices advocated by leading assessment experts through the ARIA project¹. The framework assumes shared responsibility for PBLA implementation across four key PBLA communities: teachers, programs, local authorities monitoring programs, and national authorities setting language policy. It also recognizes that continuous learning and self-assessment is an essential part of classroom assessment practices.

The Practice Review Framework is aspirational in nature, offering standards that those working in classrooms, at the program level, or with national policy can use to self-assess their PBLA practice and develop action plans for improvement. Those working with the local authorities can use the framework in their monitoring of classroom and program practice. The attached appendix includes information on how to access the framework tools.

This document reports on a pilot practice review that used the PBLA Practice Review Framework. The pilot took place between November 2016 and March 2017 and involved Classroom teachers, Lead teachers, Program Administrators, and IRCC Settlement officers in five LINC sites across the country.

The Sites

Of the five sites, one had participated in the initial PBLA pilot, three were part of Cohort One, and one was part of Cohort Two. The pilot sites were located in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick.

The Process

The pilot rolled out in four stages, preparation, implementation, review, and revision:

Preparation for Pilot Practice Review (October through early November 2016):

1. Pre-reading package was sent to Administrators, IRCC Settlement officers, and Lead teachers.
2. Webinar was hosted, introducing the framework and proposed processes to participants.
3. Supplementary orientation to PBLA was provided for IRCC officers.

Implementation of Pilot Practice Review (November 2016 through March 2017):

1. Teachers completed the self-assessment and action plan, discussed their action plans with colleagues, and submitted action plans (but not self-assessments) to administrators.

¹ Gardner, J., Harlen, W., Hayward, L., Stobart, G., and Montgomery, M., (2010) *Developing Teacher Assessment*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

2. Lead teachers completed the self-assessment and action plan and discussed action plans and support needed to achieve action plans with administrators.
3. Administrators completed program practice review, identified action items, and sent support documentation and program action plans to IRCC.
4. IRCC Settlement officers reviewed the support documentation and program action plans and scheduled site visits.
5. IRCC Settlement officers and Administrators met to discuss the review of documentation and notes from site visits.

Review of Pilot Practice Review (January through March 2017):

1. All participants (Classroom teachers, Lead teachers, Administrators and IRCC Settlement officers) completed anonymous feedback surveys.
2. Advisory group reviewed feedback, prepared recommendations, and held a participant meeting to summarize feedback and discuss recommendations.

Revision of Practice Review Framework (April 2017):

1. Recommendations were implemented and revisions finalized.

The following two sections present the feedback gathered from participants and the recommendations subsequently implemented in the Practice Review Framework.

PART ONE: SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

We used a series of rating scale and open-ended questions to gather feedback on the PBLA Practice Review Framework pilot from all stakeholder groups. The attached appendix includes information on how to access the questionnaires.

Participants:

Classroom teachers – 84 responses
Lead teachers – 5 responses
Administrators – 7 responses
IRCC Settlement officers – 4 responses

Feedback on PBLA Practice Review Document and Tools

1. Teachers and administrators found the framework and the self-assessment tool useful for reflecting on their classroom/program practice. IRCC Settlement officers found the framework helpful for reviewing a program's implementation of PBLA.

Percentage of respondents that found the framework useful:²

Classroom teachers – 97.6%
Lead teachers – 100%
Administrators – 100%
IRCC Settlement officers – 100%

2. Respondents felt that the Practice Review Framework was helpful in focusing the IRCC site visit and post-visit discussion.

Percentage that found the framework useful:

Administrators – 100%
IRCC Settlement officers – 100%

3. IRCC Settlement officers felt that the orientation material (PBLA 101 webinar) was helpful in introducing PBLA.

Percentage that found the orientation material very useful – 100%

4. Participants provided several comments on the framework:
 - *It was good to take some time to do some self-reflection.*
 - *The Practice Review Framework led naturally to my goal setting and working on accomplishing the goals I set will help me to improve my practice.*
 - *It is a good overview of the standards required for successful PBLA implementation. It allows for program staff and administration to reflect on the work done so far, identify areas for improvement and have clear understanding of the expectations.*

² Many questions used a four-point rating scale: Very useful, Somewhat useful, Not very useful, Not at all useful. For ease of reading, responses have been collapsed into Useful and Not useful.

- *The self assessment tool was a good tool for seeing where our holes are as we practice PBLA. It was good for teachers to see all the PBLA steps condensed in a questionnaire to make an overview easier to see, especially for teachers new to PBLA. We also followed this up with peer discussions on action plans and a group discussion with administrators on these struggles. The peer support and feedback to administrators was the essential part of this tool working well.*
 - *It was useful in targeting key areas of improvement and providing confirmation that all listed components were being attended to.*
5. They also had suggestions to improve the Classroom Practice Review Framework:
- *For ESL Literacy learners, self-reflection, and peer feedback pose challenges. Thus any answer to that question will reflect a much more flexible and interpretive attempt to work in these elements.*
 - *For ESL Literacy learners we are often teaching the concepts of things like assessment criteria, rubrics, needs assessment, learning reflection, self assessment. It was sometimes difficult to give myself a rating on how well I was accomplishing these practices in general, when at the levels I teach, learners are still developing the metacognitive skills to realize these learning goals.*
 - *Standard 3. Statement 4 should be made into two statements, so that “peer assessment” and “self assessment” are separate.*
 - *There is a lot of reference to semester based programs and the reporting periods that are connected to that kind of system, when in reality most LINC programs are not semester-based. Our intake is monthly and continuous so it is more challenging for us to respond to some of the questions when they are talking about a routine of a semester-based program.*
 - *The action plan seems to focus on something that you aren’t doing so well. It would be nice to frame it in a way that you could also focus on what you have done very well. Perhaps a two-part action plan – I need to work on... and I will share this....*

Feedback on Goal-Setting/Action Plan Activities

1. Respondents found the goal-setting/action plan activity helpful.

Percentage that found the goal-setting activity useful:

Classroom teachers – 94%
 Lead teachers – 100%
 Administrators – 100%

In addition:

Classroom teachers who found sharing the action plan with a colleague useful – 94%
 Administrators who found the review of teacher action plans helpful for completing the program practice self-assessment and planning for PD needs – 100%

2. Administrators indicated that the discussion with teachers during the meeting about the Practice Review Framework was useful in helping them complete the Program Practice self-assessment and plan for PD needs.

Percentage of administrators who found the discussion useful – 86%

3. Classroom teachers indicated that they would receive support for their action plans through a variety of means (checking all that applied).

Through professional development sessions – 71%
Through small group discussions with colleagues – 71%
Through support from a Lead teacher – 60%
I'm not sure – 13%
My program will not provide support – 1%

4. Lead teachers indicated that they requested the following support for PBLA implementation from their administrators (checking all that applied).

Professional development support for my action plan – 80%
Administrator to take a more active role in certain aspects of PBLA – 20%
Adjustments to organization factors (scheduling, compensation, etc.) – 80%

5. Classroom teachers generally felt that they received sufficient information about the purpose of the framework and how it would be used.

Yes – 72%
No – 5%
Not sure – 23%

6. Respondents generally felt it would be useful to have a mid-year check-in to review progress towards meeting individual and program action plans.

Percentage that thought a mid-year check-in would be useful:

Classroom teachers – 79%
Administrators – 100%

7. Sample comments on the goal-setting activity and overall processes:

- *One thing I took back to my classroom was to check on monthly goals half way through the month. This provides a good reminder that these goals need to be thought about with a follow through.*
- *The review was extremely helpful. It allowed us to find both program gaps and classroom gaps. The action plans are being used to establish staff goals for the upcoming year. The process was simple and did not create much extra work for teachers who are already working at capacity. As an administrator, I am constantly evaluating our program, so I found the framework very helpful and clear. The visit with our IRCC officer was helpful because it let her see below the surface of a classroom visit and our regular reports. It was also helpful for us to be able to talk about our challenges and to hear what IRCC is working on. I really enjoyed the entire process.*

8. Suggestions to improve the processes:

- *Since semester lengths and dates differ among language providers, it might be beneficial to allow flexibility for officers and SPOs in determining when the review is done.*
- *It was not stated how our program will support us in achieving our action plan. Some additional paid time should have been allotted for this process.*

- *If we are going to have these goals, it would be very useful if our program incorporated them into our annual Performance Appraisal instead of adding it on.*
- *Check-in meetings would be great only if we get the extra paid time to do that.*
- *It was presented as a personal activity to be completed privately. As it turned out, it was something that we turned into our managers and something that I suspect we are going to be quite accountable for.*

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9. Other comments

A few respondents used the open-ended questions to express their concerns with other aspects of PBLA, beyond the scope of this review. The comments related to lack of classroom materials and insufficient prep time. These comments were brought forward to IRCC through the project advisory group.

PART TWO: REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the feedback received, the following recommendations were drafted and distributed to pilot participants (Lead teachers, Administrators and IRCC Settlement officers). As suggested in the list of activities, a meeting was held to discuss the recommendations. All recommendations were supported by the group and subsequently incorporated into the revised Practice Review Framework and processes.

Recommendations Related to the PBLA Practice Review Framework and Tools

1. Classroom Practice Standards:

- a. Insert a statement at the beginning to indicate how the framework will be used – that classroom instructors will complete the self-assessment individually and then share their action plans in a discussion with colleagues and in writing with their Administrators.
- b. In questions related to needs assessment, goal-setting and reflection activities, indicate that teachers working with ESL Literacy learners or at CLB 1 work towards this intention in a way that is appropriate for learners at these levels.
- c. Replace the word “semester” with the term “reporting period” to recognize the fact that many programs have continuous intake and do not work on a semester system.
- d. Revise the action plan to include a place for teachers to indicate an aspect of PBLA that is working well, that they are particularly proud of. The action plan would then have two parts:
 - Identify an aspect of PBLA that is working very well in your classroom.
 - Identify 1 -2 things that you will work on to improve your PBLA practice. Identify what you want to improve, the action you will take and indicate a timeline.

2. Program Practice Standards:

Revise the action plan to include a place for programs to indicate something that is working well, that they are particularly proud of. The action plan would then have two parts:

- Identify an aspect of PBLA that is working very well in your program.
- Identify 3 – 4 things that you will work on to improve your PBLA practice. Identify what you want to improve, the action you will take, the results you expect and a timeline.

3. Provide all tools in fillable PDF format to support a paperless environment.

4. Remove “Draft for Discussion” from all documents and replace with “Working Draft” for the first year of the national roll-out.

Recommendations Related to PBLA Practice Review Processes

1. Processes:

Keep all Practice Review Framework processes in place:

- a. Administrators introduce the framework to classroom teachers. Teachers complete the self-assessment individually, and come together to share and discuss their action plans with colleagues. Teachers submit their action plans (but not their self-assessment checklists) to administrators.
- b. Lead teachers complete the self-assessment individually and share and discuss their action plans and support required with their administrators.
- c. Administrators consider how they will support classroom teachers to complete their action plans and share this with teachers.
- d. Administrators complete the Program Practice Review self-assessment and action plan and submit their action plans and support documentation for Standards 1, 4, and 5 to their IRCC Settlement officers.
- e. IRCC Settlement officers review the support documentation and schedule site visits with SPOs. After a site visit, settlement officer and program administrator discuss the action plan and notes from the review and site visit.
- f. Programs schedule a mid-year check in to review progress towards action plans.

2. Scheduling:

- a. SPOs and IRCC settlement officers negotiate timelines for the site visits and submission and review of information that work best for all, taking into consideration the normal reporting periods established by each provider.
- b. Administrators try to schedule the introduction of the Classroom Practice Review Framework and discussion of action plans to make best use of any meeting time for which teachers will be compensated. Programs be allowed to schedule meeting times by cancelling classes, if required.
- c. Administrators try to schedule a mid-point check-in of progress towards action plans to make best use of any meeting time for which teachers will be compensated.

3. Orientation:

- a. Offer an Orientation to PBLA (PBLA 101) webinar for IRCC Settlement officers and make supplementary resources (sample portfolio excerpts, etc.) available prior to the webinar.
- b. Offer an Orientation to the PBLA Practice Review Framework to stakeholders (Program Administrators, Lead teachers and IRCC Settlement officers).

4. Feedback Processes:

- a. Maintain a feedback loop as a feature of the PBLA Practice Review Framework.
- b. Use the feedback surveys to gather feedback on the framework, tools and processes from all stakeholder groups as soon as they complete their practice reviews.

All recommendations were incorporated into the revisions to the framework and processes in preparation for the national roll-out of the PBLA Practice Review Framework.

APPENDIX

The Practice Review Framework is available as a pdf. from the PBLA Emerging Practices site (See Section D) at <http://pblaepg.language.ca/>

Copies of the feedback questionnaires distributed to participants in the pilot are available on request from pbla@language.ca