# PBLA

## Practice Guidelines

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# PBLA Practice Guidelines 2019

CENTRE FOR CANADIAN LANGUAGE BENCHMARKS

This document replaces *Emerging Practice Guidelines* (2017) and
*PBLA Guide for Teachers and Programs* (2014).

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# PBLA Practice Guidelines 2019

## PBLA Foundations

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## PBLA Accountability

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**Supplements**: PBLA Practice Review Framework, Sustainability Article, Administrator Tips for Supporting PBLA, PLAR Framework

## Resources

Multilevel Modules; Professional Learning Sessions List; CLB and PBLA Training Courses List

PBLA as a classroom-based assessment system was developed using foundational principles from assessment theorists and the Canadian Language Benchmarks.

## Historical Origins for PBLA in Canada

The development of PBLA was undertaken as a priority of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)[1] in response to recommendations in several pivotal studies on language.

Makosky (2008) and Nagy and Stewart (2009) noted that assessment in LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) programs was ad hoc and inconsistent. This raised concerns about the reliability of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) outcomes of language training reported to the federal government. The reports recommended that the federal government implement a teacher-based assessment protocol in federally-funded language training programs.

In 2009, an intergovernmental study of settlement language training across Canada advised IRCC to adopt a national language portfolio assessment system to capture language development progress (Federal, Provincial, Territorial Forum, 2009). As a teacher-led, classroom-based approach, portfolio assessment was seen as facilitating authentic assessment and offering an alternative to standardized testing. It would provide teachers and learners with a tool to document, review, analyze, and reflect on learning.

To ground the initiative in best practice, IRCC looked to other uses of portfolio assessment to document language learning. In Europe, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was using the European Language Portfolio (ELP). First piloted from 1998 to 2000 and introduced on a pan-European scale by the Council of Europe in 2001, the ELP is a self-assessment tool used to evaluate, describe, and document learners' language learning and proficiency; to set personal language-learning goals; and to plan further learning.

In Canada, Manitoba had been using portfolio assessment in adult ESL and ESL Literacy programs for a number of years. Collaborative Language Portfolio Assessment (CLPA) was introduced by the provincial government in 2004 and standardized across government-funded programs in 2009 (Pettis, 2009). The experience gained through the CLPA project informed the federal government's national portfolio initiative.

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[1] Known as Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) at the time.

# PBLA and the Canadian Language Benchmarks

The *Canadian Language Benchmarks* (CCLB 2012a), provide a national standard for language instruction and assessment.

The following guiding principles of the CLB are also foundational to PBLA and inform second language planning, teaching and assessment practices (Figure 1).

**The CLB standard is learner-centred:**
Language instruction is based on the expressed needs and goals of learners; learners are informed and involved in decision making related to their language learning.

**The CLB standard is competency- based:**
The competency statements presented in the CLB describe what learners can do in English. They are broad, general statements and are intended to be contextualized within language functions and social settings when planning instruction and assessing learner performance.

**Figure 1:** The CLB Standard and Assessment Practice (CCLB 2014)

**The CLB standard is task-based:** Assessment of learners' language abilities is determined through the performance and comprehension of real-world tasks and texts reflecting authentic communication. For more information on a task-based approach to teaching, see the video series *Taking Teaching to Task* (Manitoba Immigration, nd).

**The CLB standard stresses community, study, and work-related tasks:** Language learning tasks that are the focus of instruction and assessment are contextualized within community, study and work settings relevant to learners' needs and interests.

The theoretical model of communicative competence underpinning the CLB is also reflected in PBLA:

> *Communicative competence requires organizational knowledge, including grammatical and textual knowledge; pragmatic knowledge, including functional and sociolinguistic knowledge; and strategic competence (CCLB, 2012a, p. IX).*

Through instruction and assessment, teachers aim to address and have learners practise language learning activities related to each of these elements.

# PBLA and Current Assessment Theory

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, our understanding of assessment began to shift, with researchers asking fundamental questions about what assessment should accomplish and who is best placed to make assessment decisions.

## Formative and Summative Assessment, and Beyond

Traditionally, assessment has had several purposes:

> **Diagnostic assessment**: assessment of discrete strengths and weaknesses
> **Formative assessment**: ongoing assessment to inform instruction and improve learner performance
> **Summative assessment**: assessment after learning to determine what has been learned.

Formative assessment was traditionally an ongoing, frequently informal process of assessment conducted throughout the learning process and used to guide instruction and provide information to learners. Summative assessment was typically a more formal process used to determine the result of the learning at the end of a period of instruction. While the two types of assessment might differ in timing and level of formality, many have argued that the two have often served the same function, that is to determine if learning has occurred and to provide "snapshots" of where learners have "got to" (Torrance, 1993). In addition, summative assessment was typically associated with formal standardized tests, often developed externally and not necessarily related to needs and goals of learners. The teacher's role was primarily relegated to preparing learners for the test and exam invigilation rather than meeting learners' language learning goals.

In 1998, Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam undertook an expansive literature review that showed how formative assessment practices could be used to improve learning. The Assessment Reform Group (ARG), discussing this new understanding, commented:

> *Assessment which is explicitly designed to promote learning is the single most powerful tool we have for both raising standards and empowering lifelong learners (1999, p.2).*

Other researchers (Hattie, 2009; Bullock, Bishop, Martin, & Reid, 2002) supported Black and Wiliam (1998), adding that the approach to assessment is a key determiner of its impact. For example, they found no evidence that increasing the amount of testing alone enhances learning. Instead, they found that the most effective assessment is planned for and goal driven, engaging both teachers and learners in reflection and dialogue.

Black and Wiliam found that an increased emphasis on what they term assessment *for* learning contributes to positive learner achievement in the classroom. The primary purpose of assessment *for* learning is to provide feedback that will promote student learning, feedback that will help learners identify where they are and what they need to do next. This type of formative assessment is often informal and is integrated into all aspects of the teaching and learning process; it happens while

learning is underway. Evidence is used to diagnose learner needs, plan next steps in instruction, and provide learners with feedback they can use to improve their performance. This can be contrasted with assessment *of* learning, the assessment that comes after learning to determine the result of the learning. For a brief summary of this difference, see the Wiliam's video *Formative Assessment* (Wiliam, nd).

Black and Wiliam (1998) and others (Harlen & Gardner, 2010) went on to suggest that all assessment has the potential to be used directly to help learning. For a full discussion of these assessment possibilities, see the second section in this document, *PBLA Portfolios: Key Elements.* PBLA embraces the notion that all assessment should be designed to enhance learning and incorporates specific classroom strategies that have been found effective in doing so.

### Assessment *for* Learning (A*for*L) Strategies

Based on research and work with classroom teachers, Leahy, Lyon, Thompson, and Wiliam (2005) identified five key assessment *for* learning (A*for*L) strategies. Ongoing, effective use of these strategies supports learner autonomy and has been shown to have a powerful impact on  learning. All are foundational to PBLA practices.

1.  **Clarify learning intents and criteria for success.** Language learning is enhanced when the intentions or goals of learning and the criteria for success are transparent to learners.

    **How is this reflected in PBLA Practice?** In PBLA, teachers share learning goals for classroom modules and lessons and are clear about the expectations for the skill-using and assessment tasks[2] that learners complete.

2.  **Incorporate classroom activities that elicit evidence of learning.** Language learning is enhanced when learners engage in classroom activities that provide teachers with information they can use to adjust instruction and meet learning needs.

    **How is this reflected in PBLA Practice?** In PBLA, learners engage in classroom activities and discussions that provide ongoing evidence of what they know, as well as gaps in their learning. This information helps teachers plan targeted activities to bridge these gaps. Teachers seek additional information through activities in which learners reflect on their learning.

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[2] In other CCLB documents, *skill-using and assessment tasks* are sometimes described as *skill-using activities and   assessment tasks*. The two phrasings carry the same meaning.

3. **Provide feedback that moves learners forward.** Language learning is enhanced when feedback, linked to criteria, is action-oriented and addresses what the learner needs to do to improve. It is based on an understanding of the desired goal, uses evidence of where the learner is now, and provides information about how to close the gap between the two (Sadler, 1989).

> **How is this reflected in PBLA Practice?** In PBLA, teachers are encouraged to provide feedback, based on clear criteria, that learners can act on, as well as in-class opportunities to apply the feedback.

4. **Activate learners to become instructional resources for one another.** Language learning is enhanced when learners engage in activities in which they can support or help one another.

> **How is this reflected in PBLA Practice?** In PBLA, learners can provide explanations or assistance to classmates. In some cases, they can act as informed observers, giving feedback on selected aspects of performance.

5. **Activate learners to become owners of their learning.** Language learning is enhanced when learners take ownership of their learning and use agreed-on criteria to carry out self- assessment and learning reflection.

> **How is this reflected in PBLA Practice?** In PBLA, learners are involved in setting personal language learning goals and monitoring their progress toward these goals. They are clear about the expectations in real-world skill-using and assessment tasks and have opportunities to self-assess their work. Through ongoing reflections, learners identify strategies they can apply independently to improve their language ability.

The CCLB resource, *Integrating CLB Assessment*, Chapter 1 (CCLB, 2016) presents these strategies in detail, including suggestions for bringing these strategies to life in your classroom. Activating learners as resources for each other is discussed in Chapter 6, and action-oriented feedback in Chapter 7. Additional suggestions can be found in Embedded Formative Assessment (Wiliam, 2011).

## Classroom-based Assessment

Assessment *for* learning foregrounds the professional role of teachers in assessment (Davison & Leung, 2009; Leahy & Wiliam, 2011; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Daugherty, 2011), and as such is consistent with Makosky's (2008) and Nagy and Stewart's (2009) calls for a teacher-led assessment protocol in Canada.

## The Dependability of Classroom-based Assessment[3]

The increased emphasis on A*for*L strategies, along with the focus on the interrelationship of formative and summative assessment, led to further research of the advantages of classroom-based assessment, and the professional role of teachers in that assessment (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & Wiliam, 2003; Davison & Leung, 2009; Gardner, Harlen, Hayward and Stobart, 2010; Leahy and Wiliam, 2011; Harlen, 2004, 2005; Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2014).

Part of this discussion has focused on the dependability of classroom-based assessment. In 2004, Wynne Harlen of the University of Cambridge undertook a systematic review of 30 papers for the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information (EPPI) Centre of the University of London, England, in order to provide research evidence for the dependability of summative assessment by teachers. The study also explored the conditions that affect the reliability and validity of teachers' summative assessments. It found that assessments by teachers had the potential to provide accurate summative information when specific conditions were met.

Additionally, in the longitudinal King's Oxfordshire Summative Assessment Project (KOSAP), teacher educators/researchers collaborated with a group of 18 teachers over a period of two and a half years, to explore strategies that could enhance the quality of teachers' summative assessments and to promote a positive interaction between formative and summative assessment practices (Black, Harrison, Hodgen, Marshall & Serret, 2011). Together, the two studies suggest a number of conditions for quality classroom-based assessment.

Both studies found that the task design process was key to reliable assessment. Designing the task gave teachers a deep understanding of learning goals and criteria, and this understanding was in turn key to task and assessment validity. For this reason, Harlen argues that programs should support teachers in the development of tasks and criteria, rather than merely developing standardized assessment tasks (Harlen, 2005, p. 267). The KOSAP study found that the careful implementation of tasks was key to effective assessment, including how tasks and criteria were introduced in the class, the amount of scaffolding provided, and the use of peer assessment.

Teachers in the KOSAP study specifically explored how summative assessment could be embedded in classroom work and how learner portfolios could be structured to include a range of tasks appropriate to the learning goals.

Both studies also found that the dependability of the summative results lay in a shared interpretation of assessment criteria. Both emphasized the value of moderation (sometimes called calibration) sessions in which teachers look at learner work together, as an important step in developing a shared understanding of learning goals and related assessment criteria.

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[3] The following section is taken (with author's permission) from *PBLA: Moving Toward Sustainability* (Holmes, 2016).

To foster both task and assessment dependability, we integrate many of these measures in PBLA. Teachers develop tasks and criteria that align with CLB standards and learner-identified interests and goals, they share criteria with learners, they encourage learner self-assessment and learning reflection, and they collect a balance and range of tasks in portfolios.

Teachers are also encouraged to work collaboratively, supported by professional development resources, to establish a common understanding of assessment standards.

## Advantages of Classroom-based Assessment

Classroom- or teacher-based assessment involves teachers from the beginning to the end: from planning the assessment program, to identifying and/or developing appropriate real-world assessment tasks, to making assessment judgments. It also engages learners, especially if self-assessment and peer feedback are complemented with teacher assessment and feedback.

According to Davison and Leung (2009), classroom-based assessment has several benefits, summarized in the table below.

Table 1: Advantages of Teacher-based Assessment

| Feature | Advantage |
|---|---|
| Scope | Teacher-based assessment extends the range and diversity of assessment collection opportunities, task types and real-world contexts. |
| Authenticity | It assesses work being done within the classroom; because the teacher knows learner capabilities, assessments are more likely to be realistic. |
| Reliability | It improves reliability by having more than one assessment by a teacher who is familiar with the learner; it allows for multiple opportunities for assessor reflection. |
| Fairness | It achieves fairness by following commonly agreed processes, outcomes and standards. |
| Feedback | Learners can receive constructive feedback immediately after the assessment has finished, hence improving learning. |
| Positive Washback | Ongoing assessment encourages learners to work consistently and provides important data for evaluation of teaching and assessment practices in general. |
| Teacher and Learner Empowerment | Teachers and learners become part of the assessment process; collaboration and sharing of expertise can take place within and across schools. |
| Professional Development | It provides an opportunity for teachers to build their assessment skills and better understand the CLB standards. |
| | Adapted from Table 2 in Davison and Leung (2009, pp. 402-403) |

# Features of PBLA

PBLA is a comprehensive, systematic, and collaborative approach to language assessment based on the use of real-world language tasks. It is teacher-led and classroom-based and integrated throughout the teaching/learning cycle. Together, teachers and learners collaborate to set language learning goals, compile examples of language proficiency and learning in a variety of contexts over time, analyze the data, and reflect on progress.

The process helps learners become more autonomous, self-aware, and responsible for their learning.

## A Learning Portfolio

PBLA is only one instance of many portfolio assessment applications. It uses learning portfolios, drawing on the best features of other types of portfolios:

**A process portfolio:** The PBLA portfolio documents the learning journey over time and therefore includes more than the end products of learning. Because it includes skill-using tasks, it can help teachers see progress and development.

**An evaluation portfolio:** The PBLA portfolio includes evidence of performance based on specific criteria from the CLB standard.

**A presentation portfolio:** The PBLA portfolio highlights learner strengths and skills and provides opportunities for learners to reflect and comment on their work and take pride in their achievements. This is especially evident in the learner conferences which are always based on portfolios.

The PBLA portfolio helps learners develop valuable metacognitive skills when they engage in self-assessment and reflection. These skills have been shown to have a significant, positive impact on learning.

## A Product and a Process

Throughout the program, learners collect examples of skill-using and assessment tasks that demonstrate learning in the four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. They maintain their portfolios in their Language Companion, a binder that they receive at the outset of their language training.

Throughout the term, learners are encouraged to self-assess and to think reflectively about their language learning process. At key intervals each learner, with the teacher's assistance, uses the accumulated data to discuss progress towards their goals, to highlight ongoing or emerging challenges and to discuss strategies to overcome them. Teachers use what they learn from these reflections to modify instruction.

At the end of the term or reporting period, the teacher collects the learners' portfolios, reviews the collected data and other records, evaluates the language-learning  outcomes, assigns benchmarks, and prepares progress reports. The teacher then meets with  each learner to go over the report and discuss the supporting data from the portfolio.

## Supplement: Glossary

## Supplement: Bibliography

## Supplement: Makosky (2008)

## Supplement: Nagy & Stewart (2009)

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# PBLA Portfolios: Key Elements

The PBLA learning portfolio is used to document growth and achievement over time and to demonstrate proficiency in terms of the CLB. The assessment practices evident in the portfolio reflect principles of assessment *for* learning and CLB standards.

## The Language Companion

Learner portfolios are housed in the *Language Companion* – a binder supplied by the funder and given to learners to support language learning, PBLA, and the learner's settlement in Canada. Three versions of the *Language Companion* exist: *ESL Literacy*, *CLB 1-4*, and *CLB 5-8* (CIC, nd).

In the *My Portfolio* section of the binder, learners organize artefacts for review at the end of the designated reporting period. *My Portfolio* is divided into six subsections:

> **About Me:** This section of the portfolio includes needs assessment results, a goal statement, learning reflections and the learner's incoming CLB levels.

> **Listening/Speaking/Reading/Writing:** These four sections of the portfolio hold the artefacts that have been collected since the last benchmarks were assigned. Each skill must include a skills inventory sheet.

> **Other**: This section may include a range of information based on the learner's needs. For example, learners can use this section for artefacts that track progress towards a personal goal, such as getting a driver's licence, or towards addressing a troublesome, discrete language skill, such as spelling. Learners in specialized classes can use this section for items related to goals in their course or program.

In the *My Notes* section of the *Language Companion*, learners can file their daily work such as  class notes, skill-building activities (e.g., grammar or vocabulary exercises), rough drafts and other program/classroom handouts.

For tips and strategies for using the *Language Companion*, see the supplementary document, *Teaching Tips and Strategies*.

## Required Components of the PBLA Portfolio

The CLB standard and principles of assessment *for* learning together guide what is included in learner portfolios.

## Needs Assessment

The needs assessment process helps to identify topics and social situations of relevance to the learner. Needs assessments may be done at different times during a course or term: at the beginning, to help plan a course, and/or prior to each module or topic, to help focus instruction and learning. Needs assessments are processes, not static documents; they should be reviewed periodically.

Sample needs assessments can be found in the supplementary document, *PBLA Portfolio Elements: Samples* and in the *ESL for ALL Support Kit*, Section V: ESL Literacy Resources (CCLB, 2015).

Needs assessments are filed in the *About* Me section of *My Portfolio.*

**Why do we include needs assessments?** Like the CLB, PBLA is learner centred; a clear understanding of learner needs is essential for curriculum planning, goal setting, teaching, and assessment.

## Goal Setting

Goal setting helps learners identify their language goals. Like needs assessment, goal setting may be done at the beginning of the course or reporting period. Goals should be specific objectives that challenge the learner but are still achievable within the timeframe available. They will provide focus for the learner's language learning and a reference for discussions about progress.

Shorter term goals are useful: a goal based on a module or on a week of study will help learners to see incremental improvements. One example can be found in the multilevel module (with teaching materials): *At the Walk-in Clinic.* Additional goal-setting examples can be found in the supplementary document, *PBLA Portfolio Elements: Samples.* .

For ESL literacy and beginning ESL learners, goal setting may be challenging; activities such as class goals or pictorial goal statements may help to introduce the concept and capture the intention. Samples for ESL Literacy can be found in the *ESL for ALL Support Kit*, Section V: ESL Literacy Resources (CCLB, 2015).

Goal statements are stored in the *About* Me section of *My Portfolio* and should be reviewed during the course of study and also at the end of a reporting period.

**Why do we include goals?** Goal setting is rooted in the learner-centred nature of PBLA; the process engages learners in making decisions about their learning, reflecting the fundamental understanding that activating learners to become owners of their learning improves learning outcomes.

## CLB Levels

To clearly see their language development, learners and teachers need reference points for where they started.

At the outset of the class, learners should record their CLB levels (from their CLB placement assessment or from their previous class) in the portfolio. ESL Literacy and beginning ESL learners may find a graphic representation of their CLB levels easier to understand than a written form; a sample can be found in the supplementary document, *PBLA Portfolio Elements: Samples*.

Initial CLB levels are recorded in the *About Me* section of *My Portfolio*.

## Learning Reflections

Learning reflections consider the process of learning: what helps the learner learn. They focus on learners' thinking about learning – and are not just descriptions of what was done in class. They should be incorporated as a regular part of the instructional cycle, for example at the end of a module.

Beginning ESL learners might find reflections challenging, so consider completing and posting learning reflections as a class. Learners can then copy them and add them to their portfolios.

> **Example:** You might ask learners to choose one of the speaking strategies that was taught in class that week and reflect on their experience of using the strategy: *When did they try the strategy? What happened? What might they do differently next time?*

See the supplementary document, *PBLA Portfolio Elements: Samples* for sample learning reflections. Samples for ESL Literacy can be found in the *ESL for ALL Support Kit*, Section V: ESL Literacy Resources (CCLB, 2015).

Learning reflections are filed in the *About Me* section of *My Portfolio*.

## Self-assessments

Self-assessments consider what learners can do and how well they can do it related to task criteria. They help learners understand criteria and take responsibility for their own learning. Learners should have opportunities to self-assess on some (but not all) skill-using and assessment tasks.

> **Example:** You might give learners the assessment tool before they complete a writing assessment task. They could then initial each of the criteria that they think they have met before handing in the task and assessment tool. When you provide feedback using the assessment tool, learners could compare it with their self-assessment.

See the supplementary document *PBLA Portfolio Elements: Samples* for sample self-assessments. Samples for ESL Literacy can be found in the *ESL for ALL Support Kit*, Section V: ESL Literacy Resources (CCLB, 2015).

Self-assessments and peer feedback, when used, are identified as such and attached to the associated artefact. They are not separate artefacts. Self-assessments are filed with the associated language task under the relevant skill in *My Portfolio*.

In the case of a speaking task, a self-assessment can be used together with other evidence as a single artefact. This evidence may include one or more of the following:

- An audio or video recording of the learner performing the speaking task
- An assessment tool and teacher assessment (in the case of an assessment task)
- Peer observation and feedback sheets (in the case of a skill-using task)
- A self-assessment that has been initialed by the teacher, indicating agreement.

> **Why do we include learning reflections and self-assessments?** Learners who understand language learning objectives and assessment criteria, and who have opportunities to think about their learning process, show greater progress than those who do not (McDonald & Boud, 2003; Davies, 2000).

## Artefacts: Skill-using and Assessment Tasks[4]

To prepare learners for in-class real-world language tasks, teachers engage them in a variety of skill-building activities and skill-using tasks. Skill-building activities are designed to build the discrete prerequisite skills necessary for success on skill-using and assessment tasks. They focus on form and accuracy (e.g., in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation exercises). While important for learning, they are not included in the learner portfolio. Instead, they may be filed in the My Notes section of *My Portfolio*.

Assessment tasks are often viewed as the most important artefacts in a portfolio. They focus on assessment *of* learning and provide a snapshot of achievement. However, skill-using tasks also play a vital role. They are the everyday classroom tasks in which learners have an opportunity to practise their skills and get feedback on their performance. They also provide evidence that helps a teacher identify growth over a reporting period, and as such are valuable artefacts in any review process.

To review the steps in developing productive and receptive assessment tasks, including assessing different levels of comprehension, see the CCLB videos *Developing a Receptive Skills Assessment Task* and *Developing a Productive Skills Assessment Task* (CCLB, nd), and *Integrating CLB Assessment* (CCLB, 2016), *Chapter 3, Developing Productive Skills Assessment Tasks* and *Chapter 4, Developing Receptive Skills Assessment Tasks*.

Skill-using and assessment artefacts are filed under the relevant skills in *My Portfolio*.

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[4] In other CCLB documents, *skill-using and assessment tasks* are sometimes described as *skill-using activities and assessment tasks*. The two phrasings carry the same meaning.

NOTE: If learners enter class with a portfolio and have not been assigned new benchmarks, they should keep all entries completed after the last benchmarks were assigned. These entries should be considered in the review at the end of the reporting period.

**Why do we include both skill-using and assessment tasks?** PBLA portfolios document growth and achievement. Together, skill-using and assessment tasks demonstrate what the learner can do, over time – helping learners see their progress and helping teachers make dependable judgements about what the learner can do in English.

## Portfolio Skills Inventory Sheets

Learners need to maintain a dated inventory for each skill (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) in their portfolios, recording the skill-using and assessment tasks included and the competency areas addressed. Inventories help learners to keep track of the sequence and number of portfolio entries.

For examples, see the supplementary document, *Portfolio Skills Inventory Sheets*.

Skills inventories are filed at the beginning of each of the four skills in *My Portfolio*.

## A Summary of Expectations for Portfolio Entries

Table 2: A Summary of Expectations for Portfolio Entries

| Item that must be included | Features |
|---|---|
| **Portfolio Section: ABOUT ME** | |
| **Autobiography** | The autobiography is no longer a required component. |
| **CLB Levels** | Learners record their CLB levels from their CLB placement assessment or from their previous class |
| **Needs Assessment** | Language/presentation is appropriate for CLB level (e.g., at lower levels may include pictorial needs assessments). |
| | The needs assessment identifies social contexts for language needs, and when possible (depending on the CLB or ESL Literacy level), the language tasks of importance to learners. |
| | There is evidence that learners have prioritized needs from a range of options |
| **Goal Setting** | The learner identifies a language-related goal(s) that he/she wants to be able to do for work, school and/or the community that are specific and achievable within the duration of the term or course. |
| | There should be evidence that the goal(s) were reviewed during the course. Goals may be revised, or new ones developed. |
| **Learning Reflections** | Learning reflections consider the process of learning: what helps the learner learn. |

| | This activity is a regular aspect of the learning cycle (not done as a one-off). |
|---|---|
| **Portfolio Sections: SKILL-USING and ASSESSMENT TASKS in Four Skill Areas** | |
| **Skills Inventory** | A skills inventory precedes each skill area and includes: <br>• Title of task and CLB level<br>• Date task completed<br>• Competency area(s) that the task addresses. |
| **Skill-using and Assessment Tasks** | Portfolios contain sufficient evidence. Teachers should be aiming towards 8 to 10 artefacts for each skill that the class addresses (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) as a basis for assigning benchmarks. <br><br>Artefacts should include a balance of skill-using and assessment tasks.<br><br>There should be a range of tasks across competency areas.<br><br>There should be evidence of self-assessment associated with some of the tasks. |

## Feedback and Assessment

In PBLA, the purpose(s) for assessment will affect task design and set up (for example, how much support is provided), as well as the type of feedback that is given. Traditionally the term *assessment* has been equated with testing at the end of a learning period. However, in PBLA, assessment is equated with ongoing assessment that includes feedback, given in a variety of forms, to move learning forward. For a summary of the principles of assessment foundational to PBLA, see the first section of this document: *PBLA Foundations*.

Your approach to feedback and assessment will depend on what you want to accomplish. Davison and Leung (2009) suggest a continuum of assessment possibilities that move from very informal, in–the-moment feedback to formal assessment *of* learning opportunities. To view this continuum adapted to a PBLA context see *Integrating CLB Assessment* (CCLB 2016), *Chapter 2, Planning for Assessment*.

**In-the-moment feedback (also called assessment *for* learning):** In the classroom, teachers observe performance and provide informal, on the spot feedback – on a variety of classroom activities, everyday. The feedback helps learners move forward (and the observations help teachers adjust instruction). In-the-moment feedback may be

- Direct or indirect
- Communicated to the individual learner or to the group
- In the moment or given after the task is completed
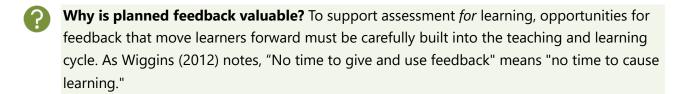- Recorded by the teacher, or not.

For example, as you monitor group work you may notice a learner effectively using a turn-taking strategy or observe several learners struggling to pronounce a new word. You might give individual feedback immediately or feedback to the whole group after the activity.

**Why is in-the-moment feedback valuable?** Feedback that is immediate, focused on what the learner is doing or has just done provides in-the-moment information that the learner can use to enhance self-awareness and make changes to improve.

**Planned feedback on skill-using tasks (also called assessment *for* learning):** As part of classroom planning, teachers incorporate a range of real-world, skill-using language tasks with CLB-aligned criteria as the focus of learning. These regular classroom activities are designed to provide opportunities for growth and development as learners practise new skills. Teachers use a variety of strategies:

- The feedback given to learners is typically descriptive and non-evaluative. It is action-oriented, providing concrete strategies that focus on how learners can improve based on their current performance.
- Feedback may come from multiple sources (e.g., teacher, self, or peers).
- Feedback may be written or oral, given to individuals or to a group.
- Class time is provided for learners to do something with the feedback (e.g. work with a partner to correct their errors).

**Why is planned feedback valuable?** To support assessment *for* learning, opportunities for feedback that move learners forward must be carefully built into the teaching and learning cycle. As Wiggins (2012) notes, "No time to give and use feedback" means "no time to cause learning."

**Formal assessment (also called Assessment *of* Learning):** Other communicative tasks will be designed to allow learners to demonstrate what they can do related to benchmark expectations. These tasks include assessment criteria aligned to the CLB and an indication of what is required for success on the task. Learners complete the tasks independently and the feedback to the learner will indicate whether they have met task expectations in relation to a specific benchmark.

To provide assessment *for* learning support in the task, teachers also give action-oriented feedback that learners can use to improve their performance.

**Why is formal assessment valuable?** It provides feedback related to benchmark level expectations (*How well am I doing?*) and feedback related to learner performance (*What do I need to do to improve?*).

For additional information on providing feedback, see *Integrating CLB Assessment* (CCLB, 2016) *Chapter 7, Making Professional Judgments and Providing Feedback*, and in the LISTN Instructors' Bulletin, *Action-Oriented Feedback*. See also the video *Feedback on Learning* by Wiliam (nd).

As you integrate assessment *for* learning into the teaching/learning cycle, you might notice an increase in the time that you devote to a module. However, for assessment to be most effective in enhancing language learning, it must be a consistent part of the teaching and learning cycle.

## Comparing Skill-using and Assessment Tasks

Portfolios should contain a balance of skill-using and assessment tasks. Questions about the differences between the two come up frequently; the table below compares key features. Keep in mind that, in practice, you could use a task for one of the two purposes, but would **NOT** use the identical task as both a skill-using task and an assessment task.

Table 3: Features of Skill-Using and Assessment Tasks, Compared

| | Skill-using Task | Assessment Task |
|---|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Opportunity for learners to *practise* what they have been learning. | Opportunity for learners to *demonstrate* what they can do in English. |
| **Task** | A communicative task that relates to a real-world task (RWT). | |
| **Alignment to CLB** | All activities and tasks should be consistent with CLB expectations (competencies, indicators of ability, profiles of ability, knowledge and strategies). Other criteria may be addressed that are specific to the task and consistent with CLB level expectations.<br><br>Criteria selected must be<br>• Appropriate to the skill using activity and/or the assessment task<br>• Appropriate for the CLB level. | |
| **Sharing Criteria with Learners and Assessment Tool** | Consistent with assessment *for* learning strategies, teachers introduce and discuss key criteria with learners before undertaking the task. | |
| | No formal assessment tool is required.<br>1. Criteria (what the learner is focussing on) ~~is~~ may be indicated on the task or shared informally (e.g., orally or written on the board); learners could copy these on their paper.<br>2. Because the focus is assessment *for* learning, there is no rating and success on the task is not indicated. | An assessment tool is required for productive tasks but not for receptive tasks.<br>1. Assessment criteria is indicated on the productive assessment tool or receptive task.<br>2. In productive tasks, one of the criteria often relates to the overall effectiveness of communication. (Did the learner achieve the purpose of the task?)<br>3. Because the focus is assessment *of* learning, task success (performance that demonstrates that the learner is meeting the key criteria of the task) is indicated on the task or tool. |

|  | Skill-using Task | Assessment Task |
|---|---|---|
|  |  | 4. In the case where a "numeric score" is used, 100% mastery is not expected. Generally, about 70% is considered satisfactory performance if the task is at benchmark level. |
| **Assessment/Feedback: Productive Skills** | Non-evaluative, comments-only feedback is given. Feedback focuses on elements that are particularly important for growth and improvement.<br>Learners may self-assess and/or receive peer or teacher feedback. Feedback may be written or oral and may be anecdotal. | Teachers evaluate learner performance of the task and provide action-oriented feedback. Feedback is specific and focuses on how the learner can improve using sentence stems such as *For next time* ... or *Please focus on*....<br><br>In addition, there should be evidence of self-assessment on some (but not necessarily all) assessment tasks. |
| **Assessment/Feedback: Receptive Skills** | Tasks are 'marked' by teacher or learner or a peer.<br><br>Self assessment: Learners may reflect on strategies used (e.g., *I listened for stressed words to help me understand the key details*). | Tasks are 'marked' by teacher or learner.<br><br>Self assessment: Learners may reflect on strategies used (e.g., *I used the pictures to help me understand the reading*). |
|  | In receptive skill-using and assessment tasks, action-oriented feedback may be included on the task itself. Often the teacher will discuss action-oriented feedback as a class. For example, after a reading task, learners might discuss in small groups where they found the information to answer the inference questions or what information they got from the caption to help them answer the question. ||

For a step-by step discussion of how to develop assessment tasks and tools, including a discussion of determining task success, see *Integrating CLB Assessment* (CCLB, 2016), Chapter 3 (productive tasks) and Chapter 4 (receptive tasks).

# Feedback Opportunities throughout the Term

Over a course of study, you should plan for opportunities where learners transfer their learning to new situations and demonstrate some of the key skills in new contexts, with diminishing amounts of support. An example of "spiralling" skills is provided in the sample assessment plan below and illustrated in the two sample tasks, one skill-using task and one assessment task.

## A Sample Assessment Plan at CLB 3-4

The following chart shows a sample assessment plan over a partial reporting period and demonstrates how skills and competencies can be practised over a series of modules. (For examples

of modules that include both skill-using and assessment tasks see the *Multilevel Modules with Teaching Materials* in the *Resources* section.  As you review the plan, you might notice

- Each module has one or more tasks related to each of the skill areas (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing), providing multiple opportunities to practise new language specific to the topic.
- Some modules don't include an assessment task for each skill area. In some, learners will practice new skills using a skill-using task and will complete an assessment task related to the competency in a later module.
- All the items listed could be portfolio artefacts.
- The number of tasks per topic will depend on a variety of factors, including learner interest, hours of class per week, etc.

The table below illustrates a partial plan from a semester-based program. Note that the teacher uses more skill-using tasks early in the semester and more assessment tasks later in the semester when learners are better prepared to demonstrate achievement of benchmark level expectations.

Table 4: A Sample Assessment Plan for a Sequence of Modules, CLB 3-4
SU = Skill-using Task     AT = Assessment Task     I, II, III, IV = Competency Area

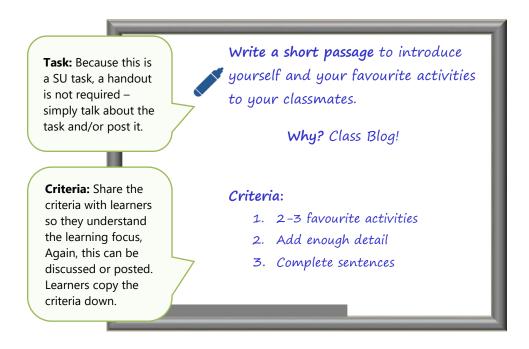| Module | Listening Tasks | Speaking Tasks | Reading Tasks | Writing Tasks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Introducing Ourselves** | ▪L/S task: Introduce yourself to a partner. Introduce your partner to another person. (I, SU) | ▪L/S Task: Introduce yourself to a partner. Introduce your partner to another person. (I, SU) | ▪Read two passages about the lives of recent immigrants to complete a retrieval chart that compares their lives with your experience. (IV, SU) | ▪Write a short passage to introduce yourself and the activities you like to your classmates for a classroom blog. (IV, SU) |
| **Selecting Recreational Opportunities in the Community** | ▪Listen to a conversation between friends talking about family activities they do at a local recreational facility and answer questions related to their activities and preferences. (IV, AT)  ▪L/S Task: Using a facility map (jigsaw activity), ask a partner about the location for various activities (e.g., yoga class). Locate them on the facility map. (II, SU) | ▪Role-play questions at information desk of a recreational facility. (III, SU)  ▪Ask your partner questions about their favorite recreational activities and where they do them. (I, AT)  ▪L/S Task: Using a facility map (jigsaw activity), ask a partner about the location for various activities (e.g., yoga class). Locate them on the facility map. (II, SU) | ▪Read a pamphlet from a local recreational facility and complete a retrieval chart to identify and compare key information. (III, SU) | ▪Copy information from website sources about two recreational classes to decide which is the best choice. (II, AT)  ▪Write a short e-mail to a friend telling about the activities you would like to do or what you did at your local recreational facility. (IV, AT) |

Table 4: A Sample Assessment Plan for a Sequence of Modules, CLB 3-4
SU = Skill-using Task     AT = Assessment Task     I, II, III, IV = Competency Area

| Module | Listening Tasks | Speaking Tasks | Reading Tasks | Writing Tasks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Going to a Walk-in Medical Clinic** | ▪Listen to conversations identifying health problems and symptoms; answer questions. (IV, SU)<br><br>▪L/S Task: Role-play making a request to see a doctor at a walk-in medical clinic. (III, AT) | ▪Role play: Ask a partner about health and respond with sympathy. (I, SU)<br><br>▪L/S Task: Role-play making a request to see a doctor at a walk-in medical clinic. (III, AT) | ▪Use a walk-in clinic poster to find key information and decide if it will be appropriate for your needs. (III, SU)<br><br>▪Find information from a medical clinic website; answer questions. (III, AT) | ▪Complete a family health history. (III, SU)<br><br>▪Complete a medical intake form with correct information. (III, AT) |
| **Returning an Item to a Store** | ▪Listen to a conversation between two people who have had bad consumer experiences; answer questions. (IV, AT) | ▪Role-play returning a faulty small appliance to a store. (III, SU)<br><br>▪Tell about an experience purchasing a faulty item. (IV, AT) | ▪Read short refund policies from two stores and complete a retrieval chart to compare policies and choose the best for your situation. (III, AT)<br><br>▪Read instructions for returning an item purchased online and answer questions. (II, SU)<br><br>▪Read a review about how someone resolved a bad consumer experience and answer questions. (IV, AT) | ▪Write a short e-mail to complain about a faulty product ordered online. (III, SU) |

## An Example of a Skill-using (SU) Task at CLB 3-4

Early in the term, while completing the module, *Introducing Ourselves* (the first module described in the chart above), you might have learners complete a skill-using (SU) task, writing a short piece about their interests (the first writing task described above, competency area: *Sharing Information*). The activity provides an opportunity to practise skills introduced in earlier skill- building (SB) activities: expressing likes and dislikes, using personal vocabulary, and writing simple sentences.

**Task:** Because this is a SU task, a handout is not required – simply talk about the task and/or post it.

Write a short passage to introduce yourself and your favourite activities to your classmates.

Why? Class Blog!

**Criteria:** Share the criteria with learners so they understand the learning focus, Again, this can be discussed or posted. Learners copy the criteria down.

Criteria:
1. 2-3 favourite activities
2. Add enough detail
3. Complete sentences

**Scaffolding Options**: Based on learner needs, you might work with the class to introduce paragraph structure, brainstorm topic sentences, prepare and share pre-writing webs to help learners add enough details, or review an exemplar.

**Activity:** No form or tool is provided. Learners complete the task, using the posted information (including the criteria checklist). You might circulate and provide support, making note of potential feedback points.

**Assessment approach:** Peer feedback options: numbering the activities, underlining the details given about each activity. Teacher feedback options: You might circulate, making notes and decisions about feedback for the group. Or, you could collect writing, circle a few errors and add one action-oriented feedback comment before returning. Learners review their feedback and address items identified individually or with a peer, while you circulate and provide support as needed. Make note of items to review in the next module.

## An Example of Assessment Task (AT) at CLB 4[5]

Later in the term, in the module, *Selecting Recreational Activities in the Community* (the second module in the chart above), you could have learners complete an assessment task to assess writing/language skills taught in the previous module and continued in this unit – focusing on stating likes, developing good support (the body of a paragraph), and using recreational vocabulary.

**Task:** Because this is an AT, a tool is required, and the task is written on the tool.

**Criteria:** Criteria are clearly stated on the tool and reviewed with the class before they begin the task.

**Competency Area**: Sharing Information          **CLB** 4

**Name**: _____          **Date**: _____

**TASK**: Write a short email to a friend telling about the activities you would like to do (or what you did) at your local recreational facility.

| | Meets Criteria | Not Yet |
|---|---|---|
| *1. You give some details about the activity and why you like it. | | |
| 2. You use recreational vocabulary correctly. | | |
| *3. You mostly use clear simple sentences. You may try some sentences with (and, or, so, but). | | |
| 4. You use correct verb tenses. | | |

Continue:                              Next Time:

**Task Success:** 3/4 – including * items      **Your score** ___ /4

**Overall communication:** One criterion assesses whether the learner achieved the overall purpose of the task.

**Assessment approach:** What constitutes success is clearly stated on tool; space is provided for action-oriented feedback.

**Scaffolding:** None.

**Activity:** Distribute or post the tool. Learners complete the task individually.

**Assessment approach:** Learners may use the tool to review their work (self-assessment), initialling each of the criteria before handing it in. You will complete the assessment *of* learning and provide action-oriented feedback (A*for*L) – on one or two items only.

**Follow-up**: Learners review their feedback and address items identified, individually or with a peer, while you circulate and provide support as needed.

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[5] Assessment tool for CLB 3 not included.

# Portfolio Artefacts: Considerations

## Competency Areas

When planning assessment and skill-using tasks over a period of instruction, it is important to cover a broad range of CLB competencies from the five competency areas (*Interacting with Others, Giving/Comprehending Instructions, Reproducing Information, Getting Things Done,* and *Sharing/Comprehending Information*). Assessment and skill-using tasks often address only one CLB competency area, but occasionally they may address more. To determine the main competency area(s), ask, "*What is the main purpose of the communication?*"

As one example, a task such as returning an item to a store and asking for a refund will likely include a greeting and a closing. However, the main purpose of this task is to receive a refund (*Getting Things Done*), not to maintain an interpersonal relationship through greetings and closures (*Interacting with Others*), so *Getting Things Done* would be considered the main competency area for this task.

It's also important to address a broad range of indicators of ability, as these serve as important criteria for assessment. While the bulleted lists underneath the competency statements (in the CLB document) provide a good starting point, tasks may require additional criteria related to language knowledge (grammatical, textual, functional, sociolinguistic and strategic competence) that are essential to completing the task successfully.

## The Number of Artefacts per Skill

To make an informed decision about a learner's outcome CLB level at the end of a term or reporting period, you will need sufficient evidence to demonstrate the learner's proficiency across a variety of tasks and competencies, in a range of social situations.

Teachers aim towards 8 to 10 artefacts per skill as the basis for making decisions about benchmark levels. The artefacts should include a balance of skill-using tasks, the everyday classroom tasks in which learners practise what they have been learning, and assessment tasks, tasks that demonstrate what a learner can do in English. For example, in a compilation of nine artefacts, four might be skill-using tasks, and five might be teacher-administered assessment tasks. The balance depends on the type of program and the needs of learners. Remember that skill-building activities are NOT included in portfolios.

Some teachers have said that they feel like they are on a teaching and testing treadmill. If you only include formal assessment tasks (A*of*L) for portfolio entries, then this is likely true.

Remember that the skill-using tasks (A*for*L) learners practise as part of routine classroom engagement are also valuable components of the teaching/learning cycle. They help to prepare learners for future assessments tasks, and over a course of study, they can provide opportunities for learners to transfer their learning to new situations and to demonstrate some of the key

competencies in new contexts, with diminishing amounts of support. Skill-using and assessment tasks both provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate their learning, but they have different requirements; see Table 2 for a summary of these differences.

## The Multilevel Class

Many adult ESL classes are multilevel, combining several CLB levels or types of learners (ESL and ESL Literacy). The following strategies can facilitate PBLA implementation in multilevel classes:

- Group learners together for learning activities and assessment tasks.
- For a particular task, use the same text but differentiate the activity according to level, or use different texts and have learners do the same activity. For example, for a CLB 2-3 task that involves writing about a class event, the CLB 2 learners could complete sentence stems while the CLB 3 learners write complete sentences. Follow a similar process in reflection activities.
- Develop assessment tasks that address more than one level.
- Assess different groups of learners on different days.
- Use volunteers (if possible) who can support instruction in the classroom.

For more information on assessment in multilevel classrooms, see *Integrating CLB Assessment into your ESL Classroom,* Chapter 5: Adapting Assessment for Multilevel Classrooms. For information on multilevel assessment in adult ESL Literacy classes, see the *ESL for ALL Support Kit,* Chapter IV, Supporting Learners with Literacy Needs. Also see the *CCLB Professional Learning Sessions* on the CCLB website (language.ca) for detailed information about implementing PBLA in multilevel classes.

## PBLA Management

### Scheduling Time

You may find a regularly scheduled time for portfolio management helps both you and learners become comfortable with routines and expectations.

For suggestions related to introducing/making time for PBLA in your classroom, see the supplementary document, *Teaching Tips and Strategies*.

### Teacher's Master Checklist

Keeping a master checklist of the artefacts that learners add to their portfolios may be helpful. The checklist helps you to monitor PBLA and ensure that you have administered a sufficient number of skill-using and assessment tasks in each skill and across a range of competency areas.

The master checklist also helps keep you on track, so that at the end of the term, you don't suddenly discover that too few listening tasks have been included or that assessment tasks only considered *Getting Things Done*, for example. It will also facilitate the portfolio review process and can be as simple as keeping your own version of the *Portfolio Skills Inventory Sheets*.

# Supplement: Teaching Tips and Strategies

# Supplement: Portfolio Elements: Sample Forms

# Supplement: Portfolio Skills Inventory Sheets

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Herbst and Davies (2014, p. 80) comment:

> *Teacher professional judgment is more reliable and valid than external tests when teachers have been involved in examining student work, co-constructing criteria, scoring the work, and checking for inter-rater reliability.*

In all PBLA assessment practices, teachers' professional judgments are central. From selecting or developing appropriate tasks, choosing or developing assessment tools, giving feedback on writing and speaking performance, to deciding when a learner is ready to progress to the next level, teachers make decisions based on professional interpretation and judgment.

PBLA protocols include *Learner Progress Reports* (LPRs) and *Learner Progress Conferences*, both attached to the reporting period.

## Making Judgements about Portfolio Contents

The PBLA portfolio shows learner growth and achievement. Telling the story of this growth involves gathering evidence, reviewing the evidence and making decisions. But first, it is important to understand what constitutes success in the context of PBLA.

### Defining Benchmark "Achievement"

Reviewing the evidence to assign benchmarks requires informed professional judgment embedded in a thorough understanding of CLB expectations. Expectations for learner ability can be found in the Profiles of Ability as well as in the CLB competency statements and indicators for each level, all found in the CLB document (CCLB, 2012a). In addition, the exemplars in the *CLB Support Kit* (CCLB, 2012b) can help you form realistic expectations about learner abilities.

Benchmark achievement does not require 100% mastery on each task – or even success in every task in each of the four skills. National Placement guidelines state that "As a general rule, the benchmarks assigned to a learner at the time of placement assessment, summative in-class assessment, or high-stakes language test, mean that the learner has achieved, and demonstrated, the level of communicative ability associated with most or all (traditionally, 70 to 100%) of the descriptors for the benchmarks assigned in each of the four skills" (CIC, 2013, p. 3). Therefore, expectation for success on each task should reflect this guideline as well as the set of tasks within each skill.

## Assigning Benchmarks

**Gathering Evidence:** The evidence supporting your review will include:

1. As a goal, 8 to 10 artefacts in each of the skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing), including a combination of skill-using and assessment tasks[6].
2. Any observational records (e.g. observation checklists) of learners' completion of CLB-aligned listening or speaking tasks. (See below.)

**Reviewing the Portfolio:** Reviewing the evidence in the skill areas to assign benchmarks is not simply a matter of tabulating scores or percentages. Instead, portfolio review uses a combination of analytic and holistic processes. The analytic review involves collecting the necessary artefacts and looking at the performance on individual entries. A holistic review entails taking a step back, widening your perspective to look at ALL entries for a skill as a whole and considering whether the learner demonstrates success consistently, that is, most of the time, at the benchmark level.

In your review, follow these steps:

**Check the number of entries.** Generally, you are reviewing portfolios after learners have been in class a sufficient number of hours aiming towards 8 to 10 entries for each skill area. The entries should be distributed across the four competency areas and reflect a range of tasks and criteria appropriate to the CLB level.

If a learner has recently moved to your class and was not assigned benchmarks upon leaving the previous class, you should consider all evidence in the learner's portfolio since benchmarks were last assigned.

**Review the assessment tasks (A*of*L).** Look at the tasks over time. More recent assessment tasks should give a clearer indication of current language ability than tasks completed earlier in the semester. Look for trends or particular areas of improvement or concern.

**Review the skill-using tasks (A*for*L).** Skill-using tasks give opportunities to practice skills and provide additional evidence of what learners can do in English. They should show growth over time. Within a competency area, does the learner show improvement over the reporting period?

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[6] In other CCLB documents, *skill-using and assessment tasks* are sometimes described as *skill-using activities and assessment tasks*. The two phrasings carry the same meaning.

**Review observational records.** Review any documented observation of learner's completion of CLB-aligned listening or speaking tasks (e.g. greetings, making requests, apologies) as part of everyday activities of the classroom. Documented observations can be included as artefacts if the tasks are consistent with CLB expectations at the level being assessed.

**Assigning Benchmark Levels:** After reviewing the portfolio entries, you will assign a benchmark level. Your guiding question will be: *Has the learner achieved the benchmark(s) they are working towards?*

## Reviewing Progress towards Personal Goals

Progress toward personal goals should also be considered in the review of portfolios, providing understandings that will be important in the learner conference.

Gather evidence from the *About Me* section of the portfolio, including

- Needs assessment(s)
- Learner goal statement(s)
- Learner review of goal statement(s)
- Learning reflections
- Your notes and anecdotal comments relating to skills and strategies a learner has developed during the course that demonstrate personal growth and learning such as the learner's ability to self-correct or their new independence from an electronic translator.

Review the evidence, asking, *What progress has the learner made towards their personal language learning goals?*

In the conference, the learner will generally take the lead in the review of personal goals, but any notes you take during your review will support the discussion.

# Reporting Progress: The Learner Progress Report (LPR)

The *Learner Progress Report* (LPR) is used when assigning/reporting benchmarks. It gives specific feedback to learners on their language progress over a reporting period, after a portfolio evaluation has been completed. A number of considerations are associated with the issuing of LPRs.

## Current LPR Protocols for Amount of Evidence Required

The LPR is used when a learner has sufficient evidence (aiming towards 8 to 10 artefacts) in **one or more of the four skills** (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) – and will be issued whether the benchmark level changes or not. A separate LPR is issued for each course the learner attends.

If the learner does **not** have sufficient evidence (aiming towards 8 to 10 artefacts) in **any of the four skills** (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing), there is NO mandatory reporting form. Learner portfolios may not have enough evidence for a number of reasons: learners may have started late or may have had sporadic attendance, for example. In these cases, programs may choose to issue a *Learner Conference Summary* (LCS), using the template previously developed by CCLB or their own template. However, it is not mandatory.

## Options for LPR Forms

1. The electronic *Learner Progress Report* comes in two formats: one with a drop-down menu of the reporting designations and one without the drop-down menu. Depending on the needs of your program, determine which electronic version to use. (Note: Check to make sure you have the appropriate Adobe program and capacity to download and save the forms.)

   Two electronic LPR versions in PDF format: one with drop down menu and one without.

2. Programs are responsible for determining if teachers need to use a reporting form for those learners who do NOT have enough artefacts in **any of the four skills**. If programs decide to use a reporting form in this situation, such as the **no longer mandatory** *Learner Conference Summary* (LCS), a template is available for download. This template could be modified to fit program needs, or a program could choose to develop their own LCS.

   LCS in Word format (link)

## Program Considerations for the LPR (Before Use)

Programs are responsible for establishing protocols to complete the *Learner Progress Report*. Before using it, programs should determine

1. Schedules for learner progress conferences and learner progress reports.
2. Name format for the program and/or classes, to ensure consistency and clarity when teachers fill in "PROGRAM". The Service Provider or Organization name and address also need to be included. Administrators can decide if they want to add additional information if there is space (e.g., satellite locations may want to include the location).
3. Systems for supplying teachers with learners' intake CLB levels and identifying whether the CLB has been assigned by an assessment centre (i.e., a new learner) or by a previous teacher (i.e., a continuing learner).
4. Protocols to ensure consistency when reporting a learner's benchmarks if a skill is being taught by more than one teacher at the same time. Remember: Learners can only be assigned one benchmark per skill.

5. Systems for supplying teachers with necessary attendance information.
6. The protocol for the required administrator's signature. Administrators may choose to sign each report or insert their electronic signature.
7. The file name format to use when saving the LPR electronically, to ensure consistency when filing reports (e.g., filed by the learner's surname, or by class and learner name).
8. Protocols to ensure that LPRs are completed and stored in a secure and consistent manner, including the length of time the progress report is stored. No copies are filed with the funder.
9. Protocols for settling learner challenges to a teacher-determined CLB level.

## Instructions for Completing the LPR

The *Learner Progress Report* is used for both ESL and ESL literacy learners.

Progress reports are intended to be a record of learners' progress in learning English. They are completed after reviewing portfolios. When reporting CLB levels, teachers fill in the COMPLETED CLB level, IE or NA for each skill.

Remember, completion means "...the learner has achieved, and demonstrated, the level of communicative ability associated with most or all (traditionally, 70% - 100%) of the descriptors for the benchmarks assigned in each of the four skills" (CIC, 2013, p. 3).

For a variety of reasons, learners may make progress in a term without completing a CLB level. This information is incorporated in the *Learner Strengths and Progress* section. You may wish to indicate progress learners have made, along with a few strategic suggestions for improvement. For detailed instructions on completing a Learner Progress Report refer to the document, *Instructions for Completing the Learner Progress Report* (April 2018).

## Current Reporting Designations

The reporting designations for PBLA have been revised (March 2018) in order to harmonize with IRCC reporting designations. The designations on the *Learner Progress Report* will now be the same as the designations entered in iCARE/HARTS. As a result, the designations appearing on the LINC Certificate and the LPR will be the same. For detailed information on the new designations and their use, see the supplement document, *Reporting Progress in iCARE and  PBLA*

# Discussing Progress: Learner Progress Conferences (LPC)

The brief (10 to 15 minute) progress conference is an opportunity for the learner and teacher to review progress in learning English in relationship to the learner's specified needs and goals. It should be a culmination of ongoing dialogues that have occurred throughout the term, as well as an opportunity to consolidate information about language proficiency and to set new directions.

## Preparing for the Progress Conference

To prepare learners, consider providing an overview of what will occur during the conference, including some of the topics of discussion. Working in groups, learners might be asked to do some of the following:

1. Review their portfolios and discuss the goals they set at the beginning of the course and the progress they have made towards them.
2. Discuss what they have learned, what they are proud of, what is still difficult, or their strengths and challenges.
3. Talk about what they think the teacher will say about their progress.

Based on the needs of learners, consider identifying and practising some phrases or sentence stems that they or the teacher might use to talk about their experiences. At higher CLB levels you may consider having learners write a brief reflection.

For suggestions for preparing ESL literacy or beginning learners, see the _ESL for ALL Support Kit_ (CCLB, 2015, Section III).

## Conducting the Progress Conference

Throughout the course, learners have received ongoing feedback and engaged in self-reflections, so they should have a good idea of what they have achieved as well as their strengths and challenges.

**Talk about goals:** Talk briefly about the expectations of the course or program and refer to the personal goals the learner expressed at the beginning of the term or course.

**Reflect on progress:** Ask learners to talk about their progress – about what they can do now in English that they could not do before. Learners who are familiar with the CLB outcomes they have been working toward should be able to say whether they think they have met those outcomes.

If learners are less familiar with the CLB outcomes, they can talk about something that they could not do before, something they have improved on, and something they think they still need to improve. Ask learners to pick out samples from their portfolios that support their opinions.

If the learners are at a low CLB level, ask them to show you one or two of samples of language use that they are particularly proud of.

**Provide learners with the written progress report and discuss the contents**: Portfolio contents will provide examples of language use for discussing the progress reports.

During the conference, encourage learners to identify future goals and language learning objectives, and discuss strategies that might be helpful in furthering their language development.

## Reporting Periods

Program-specified schedules will determine when you issue progress reports to learners and schedule short one-on-one learner progress conferences.

Programs should set progress report and conference schedules that are consistent with the following criteria:

1. Reporting periods should allow sufficient instructional hours so that there is reasonable expectation that learners will make progress to the next benchmark level in one or more skill areas. According to the Watt study (2004, Executive Summary), "Students with 8 to 12 years of education register moderate rates of progress over any 250 hours of instruction, changing approximately .6 of a benchmark level in Listening and Speaking, .9 of a benchmark level in Reading, and .5 of a benchmark in Writing."
2. Reporting periods should allow time to gather sufficient evidence to document progress (aiming ~~for~~ towards 8 to 10 entries per skill area).

Teachers should use the above information to apply to their own program situation. The schedules that follow are examples only.

Table 5: Sample Progress Report and Conference Schedules

| Hours of Delivery | Number and Frequency of Progress Conferences | Number and Frequency of Progress Reports |
|---|---|---|
| **10 hours per week** Program runs from September to end of May. | **2 Progress Conferences** Conference 1: January Conference 2: May | **1 Progress Report** End of May |
| **15 hours per week** Program runs from September to June. | **2 Progress Conferences** Conference 1: January Conference 2: June | **2 Progress Reports** Report 1: January Report 2: June |
| **25 hours per week** Year-round program with 4 terms of 12 weeks. | **4 Progress Conferences / year** Conferences held in conjunction with progress reports. | **4 Progress Reports / year** Report 1: end of 12-week term Report 2: end of 12-week term Report 3: end of 12-week term Report 4: end of 12-week term |

1. If learners have a complete portfolio before the benchmark reporting period (sufficient artefacts accumulated over an appropriate number of instructional hours since the last reporting period), you may wait until the scheduled reporting period to review the portfolio and issue a progress report or schedule a separate progress conference and progress report. **The decision is at the discretion of the program**.

2. If learners don't have enough artefacts (aiming towards 8 to 10 per skill) in their portfolio to conduct a portfolio review at the scheduled benchmark reporting period, schedule a progress conference to discuss progress and provide feedback; however, there is no mandatory PBLA reporting form to complete. Programs may choose to use some type of reporting form to guide the conference, but **the decision is at the discretion of the program**.

3. Questions around the scheduling of and reporting on iCARE, HARTS and the LINC certificate should be directed to the funder.

# Supplement: LPR Electronic Form (1)

# Supplement: LPR Electronic Form (2)

# Supplement: Instructions for Completing the LPR (formerly Handout 10.4)

# Supplement: Technical Instructions for Completing the LPR (formerly Handout 10.5)

# Supplement: Reporting Progress in iCARE and PBLA

# Supplement: Learner Conference Summary (no longer mandatory)

# References

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (2012a). *Canadian language benchmarks: ESL for  adults.* Ottawa, ON: www.language.ca.

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (2012b). *CLB support kit.* Ottawa,  ON: www.language.ca.

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (2015). *ESL for ALL support kit.* Ottawa,  ON: http://www.language.ca/product/clb-esl-for-all-support-kit-pdf-e/

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Ottawa, ON: http://www.language.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/National_Placement_Guidelines_2014-1.pdf

Herbst. S. & Davies, A. (2014). *A fresh look at grading and reporting in high schools.* Moorabbin,  AU: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Watt, D., & Lake, D. (2004). *Benchmarking adult rates of second language acquisition and  integration: How long and how fast?* Edmonton AB: Alberta Learning, Language Training  Programs and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

# PBLA Accountability: Sharing Responsibility for Success

A large-scale initiative such as PBLA works best when responsibility for success is shared. In PBLA, this interdependence has been articulated in two important contexts: a framework for a practice review, and the statements of stakeholder roles.

## PBLA Practice Review Framework

The *PBLA Practice Review Framework* (CCLB, 2017a) is a self-assessment framework developed to support PBLA sustainability. It recognizes that the responsibility for PBLA success is shared by teachers, programs, funding authorities engaged in monitoring language programs, and national authorities responsible for setting language policy. It recognizes that continuous learning and self-assessment is an essential part of both classroom assessment practice and professional practice (CCLB, 2017a).

The framework is based on the work of the Assessment Reform Group in the UK, whose research and writing influenced many of the assessment principles underlying PBLA. They, along with 200 other assessment experts, were part of the Analysis and Review of Innovations in Assessment (ARIA) project, working together to better understand the processes that support the sustainability of large-scale teacher assessment initiatives (Harlen, 2010). The group found that sustainability depends on agreed-upon assessment principles and standards, to ensure that all stakeholders share an understanding of the aims of assessment, and can assess its effectiveness (Harlen, 2010, p. 8).

The *Practice Review Framework* was developed and piloted in five LINC programs across Canada from November 2016 to March 2017. Feedback from the pilot (CCLB, 2017b) led to revisions and a national roll-out of the framework:

> **Cohort One**: 2017-2018
> **Cohorts Two and Three**: 2018-2019
> **Cohort Four**: 2019-2020

The following broad principles, adapted from the ARIA project, inform the PBLA initiative.

1. Assessment of any kind should ultimately improve learning.
2. Assessment should be task based and aligned to the CLB standards, providing evidence  of what learners can do in English in community, work and study settings of relevance to  their needs and interests.
3. Assessment should be part of a process of teaching that enables learners to understand  the aims of their learning and how the quality of their achievement will be judged.

4. Assessment methods should promote the active engagement of learners in their learning and its assessment.

5. Assessment procedures should include explicit processes to ensure that information is valid and is as reliable as necessary for its purpose. At the same time, assessments of learning should be treated as approximations, recognizing the limitations of all forms of assessment.

6. Assessment should combine information of different kinds, including learner self-assessments, to inform decisions about learning and achievements.

7. Assessment should promote public understanding of learning goals relevant to learners' current and future lives. Policy makers and organizations that require CLB levels need to be aware of the assessment methods being used and their suitability for reporting learner progress and achievement.

8. Assessment methods should meet standards that reflect a broad consensus on quality at all levels, from classroom practice to national policy.

PBLA works best when classroom teachers, lead teachers, administrators and funders work together to support effective assessment practices. A number of roles and responsibilities are in place to ensure this happens.

## Funder Role

Funders are responsible for monitoring programs including PBLA implementation.

In LINC programs, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has established guidelines and supports to assist programs to create conditions that support PBLA success[7]. They include the following:

Table 6: Guidelines for Funders

| Class levels | Programs should have classes that are organized according to the National Placement Guidelines and do not cover a range of more than two benchmarks where possible, with teachers not expected to assess a range of more than three levels. |
|---|---|
| Class sizes | Maximum class size guidelines<br>      ESL/FSL Literacy: 8 – 10<br>      CLB/NCLC 1 to 4: 20*<br>      CLB/NCLC 5+: 25 – 30<br>*If there is a mixed class, Literacy and non-literacy, a literacy learner = 2. |
| Lead Teachers | Programs should ensure a sufficient number of certified lead teachers – the equivalent of five hours per week of lead teacher support for every ten classroom teachers. |

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[7] Programs funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) should check with their local program officer to get current information about MCI guidelines.

| Prep time | Programs should build compensated preparation time into the instructional cycle. |
|---|---|
| Support for learner conferences | ESL Learner Progress Conferences (individual learner conference with teacher) are scheduled at least once each reporting period. Classes may be cancelled for these Learner Progress Conferences. |
| Support for meeting time | Meeting time is provided each semester in accordance with IRCC guidelines to support portfolio review and/or other assessment activities. |

## Administrator, Lead Teacher and Classroom Teacher Roles

In your program, the Administrator, Lead Teacher and Classroom Teacher will work as a team to implement PBLA.

### Administrator Role

Administrators are responsible to IRCC for overall PBLA implementation. They support the Lead Teachers and Classroom Teachers. Responsibilities include

- Set or change program policies and practices to facilitate PBLA implementation.
- Monitor PBLA implementation in the program.
- Supervise teachers.
- Coordinate with IRCC to ensure that appropriate resources and supports are in place.
- Complete an annual program self-assessment using the *PBLA Practice Review Framework* and identify and complete an action plan.[8]
- Provide support for lead teachers and classroom teachers completing their action plans.

Administrators have a valuable role in supporting teachers. In feedback on forums and in workshops, teachers have commented that they feel supported when administrators

- Keep up on developments in PBLA and strategize solutions to implementation challenges.
- Organize classes to minimize multilevel classes.
- Manage intake of and orientation for new learners, using processes that minimize disruption to teachers and learners.
- Develop program-wide policies for things like attendance and making up of missed assessment tasks, to provide consistency for learners and support for teachers.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate, plan and work together – such as peer support sessions for reviewing learner portfolios.
- Encourage the sharing of classroom resources and set up mechanisms for teachers to easily access these resources.

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[8] Cohort 2-3 will begin using the PBLA *Practice Review Framework* in 2018-19; Cohort 4 in 2019-20.

- Provide professional learning support (professional development sessions, CCLB Professional Learning Sessions) based on teacher-identified needs and priorities.
- Consider developing a volunteer program (including recruitment and training of volunteers) to provide classroom support.
- Allow time for change to occur, celebrating successes along the way.

While administrators play an active role in facilitating PBLA, they are not expected to review all learner portfolios. In a classroom-based assessment approach, the responsibility for instruction and assessment, including making judgments about portfolios and assigning benchmark levels, rests with teachers.

If you are an administrator, however, you will want to occasionally review selected portfolios in the program to better understand teachers' assessment practices and plan for professional development. You might also provide focused support for a teacher who is new or is having difficulty with portfolio assessment. For additional suggestions for supporting PBLA in your program, see the supplementary document, *Administrator Tips for Supporting PBLA*.

## Lead Teacher Role

The Lead Teacher is responsible to the administrator for assisting teachers in PBLA implementation. Responsibilities include

- Provide PBLA orientation, and support to new teachers.
- Advise administrators on needed supports such as PD or resources.
- Complete an annual self-assessment using the *PBLA Practice Review Framework* and identify and complete an action plan.

The Lead Teacher also plays a valuable role in supporting colleagues, using strategies that might include the following:

- Facilitate informal small-group discussions or learning groups to address common concerns using classroom teachers as resources for one other.
- Offer workshops related to PBLA implementation, such as the *CCLB Professional Learning Sessions*.
- Observe teachers and provide feedback and/or suggestions as a peer and colleague.
- Team teach or team plan on occasion.
- Give demonstration lessons.

If you are a lead teacher, you have an important supportive role, but should not be supervising or evaluating colleagues or screening portfolios or artefacts from colleagues' classrooms.

### Classroom Teacher Role

The Classroom Teacher is responsible for planning instruction and assessment in the classroom. Responsibilities include

- Work with learners to identify language needs and goals.
- Use CLB-aligned skill-using and assessment tasks that learners include in their portfolio and that provide evidence of learner growth and achievement.
- Provide action-oriented feedback that learners can use to improve.
- Use a variety of strategies to engage learners in the assessment process and encourage learner reflection and self-assessment.
- Review learner portfolios at the end of a reporting period and assign benchmarks based on the evidence.
- Complete an annual self-assessment using the *PBLA Practice Review Framework* and identify and complete an action plan.

In the end, PBLA builds on the understanding that ongoing, effective assessment provides learners with feedback that they can use to improve. It also recognizes that as a teacher, you are best situated to observe and assess learners' language proficiency related to CLB expectations, and your professional judgements are foundational to the reflective teaching and assessment practices that best support learners in their learning journeys.

# Supplement: PBLA Practice Review Framework

# Supplement: Sustainability Article (Holmes 2018)

# Supplement: Administrator Tips for Supporting PBLA

# Supplement: Certifying New LT / PLAR

# References

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (2017a). *PBLA practice review framework (working draft)*. Ottawa, ON: http://pblaepg.language.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/PBLA-Practice-Review-Framework-Working-DRAFT-May-16-2017.pdf

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. (2017b). *PBLA practice review framework pilot final report*. Ottawa, ON: http://pblaepg.language.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PILOT-Final-Report-PBLA-PRACTICE-REVIEW-FRAMEWORK-.pdf

Harlen, W. (2010). What is quality teacher assessment? In J. Gardner, W. Harlen, L. Hayward, & G. Stobart (Eds.), *Developing teacher assessment* (pp. 29-51). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

**Multilevel Modules**

**Professional Learning Sessions List**

**CLB and PBLA Training Courses for Teachers**