

## M4-S5: Show What You Know: Assessing Understanding

CLH	<p>Hello, Gina and hello, listeners! Welcome to Session 5 in Module 4 of the TALE Academy, Show What You Know: Assessing Understanding.</p> <p>We know that our assessment practices will ideally allow us to gauge what our students understand. Were they able to access the material presented? How much of the content did our students comprehend? Did they meet the target content and language objectives of this unit?</p> <p>In this session, we will consider some of the challenges of assessing English language learners.</p>
GK	<p>Let's consider the following third grade "Number and Operations-Fractions" mathematics standard from the New York State Next Generation Mathematics Learning Standards:</p> <p>Understand a unit fraction, <math>\frac{1}{b}</math>, is the quantity formed by 1 part when a whole is partitioned into <math>b</math> equal parts.</p>
CLH	<p>I hardly understand that, and English is my first language.</p>
GK	<p>Basically, students have to be able to break a whole into equal parts and then describe the parts as a fraction. For example, if we share a cake with two people equally, we cut it into two equal parts and describe each piece as <math>\frac{1}{2}</math>.</p> <p>After a lesson where third graders practice breaking wholes into halves, meaning <math>1 = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}</math>, and fourths, meaning <math>1 = \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4}</math>, the teacher displays the fractions as images and asks students to orally name the fraction that is shaded.</p> <p>If a student orally names the first shape as "one-half" and also states orally the name of the second shape as "one-fourth," the teacher is then able to verify that the student has met this standard with halves and fourths. By stating the fractions orally in English, students are able to communicate their understanding of the standard. However, if a student is a newcomer and does not yet speak English, we run into the challenge of accurately assessing their mathematical understanding. An ELL may actually fully understand halves and fourths, but not be able to express their content knowledge due to their emergent English skills.</p>
CLH	<p>Fortunately, this is session 5 of the module, and we can pull together many of the tools and approaches we've been focusing on in this module:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For newcomers and students who read in their home language, use Google Translate to state the directions in the home language to make sure the student understands the question. Remember to use caution since Google Translate may not always provide an exact translation.</li></ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a visual word bank or digital flyer for “one-half” and “one-fourth” that students can point to if they are not yet able to state their responses orally or in writing in English.</li> <li>• Throughout the lesson, explicitly model how to use the language of fractions, both orally and in writing, supported by the visuals that match the type of images that will be used on the assessments.</li> <li>• Encourage students to use their multilingual repertoire to talk about fractions using authentic examples. You can prompt an ELL to speak into the Google Translate app so you may translate their responses into English.</li> </ul>
GK	<p>When assessing ELLs we have to remember to build on what they know, we have to know what they know. For example, literacy experts remind us to look for what a student is able to do in reading, even if the child is barely speaking in English. We shouldn't level a beginner speaker as an emergent reader just because of his language level. Most English language reading assessments have not been normed for ELLs.</p> <p>In the 2013 article <a href="#">“Struggling reader or emerging bilingual student? Reevaluating the criteria for labeling emerging bilingual students as low achieving,”</a> the authors write that conducting assessments only in English results “in children being labeled as at risk of reading failure when in fact they are not.”</p> <p>Their data suggested that thousands of multilingual learners in Colorado were labeled “at risk” and placed in intervention programs unnecessarily. They estimate that when only English language reading scores were considered, just over 900 students were recognized as proficient readers, as opposed to 6,800 when students were assessed bilingually. They state that “bilingual students are relegated to compensatory education that neither builds on what they know and can do nor allows resources to be targeted to those truly in need.”</p>
CLH	<p>Understanding a student's literacy level in their home or native language is an important key to finding the appropriate scaffolds, supports, and accommodations. If students are unable to read and write in their home language, supports such as glossaries or translated materials may not be appropriate. Even in bilingual programs where ELLs are assessed in two languages, they are often evaluated primarily on whether they have met the reading standards in English. Even when their home language reading assessments present them as at or above grade level, their overall reading abilities are still perceived as deficient, as teachers are directed to report any low English scores, as if ELLs are functioning below grade level.</p>
GK	<p>For example, a newcomer assessed in Spanish may show that they are able to “read and comprehend grade-level texts independently across a variety of genres (fiction and nonfiction)”, according to the New York City Department of Education 2014 Report Card, but because they are unable to do so in English, the newcomer may be</p>

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	<p>deemed “at risk.” If we have evidence that the student can read and comprehend grade-level text at grade level or above, regardless of language, then we must honor the student’s abilities. Giving the student a below-grade-level score in English simply because a student is learning the English language does not give an accurate picture of the student’s abilities. With a more accurate assessment, a student should continue to read at- or above-grade-level texts in Spanish, while receiving necessary differentiated instruction in word work/phonics instruction to further develop English decoding skills.</p>
CLH	<p>In Session 1, we established six new mindsets that are essential to providing an excellent education for ELLs across learning environments. The fourth mindset empowers teachers to use students’ home languages to assess student understanding.</p> <p>Equity in education means giving each student access to the support and resources they need to achieve their educational goals. What does it mean to engage in equitable assessment practices for ELLs? Equitable assessment practices require us to leverage our ELLs’ home languages to more accurately understand what they know about reading and content areas. Otherwise, we risk developing an inaccurate view of their abilities.</p>
GK	<p>Fortunately, there is no shortage of digital tools and apps that teachers can use to support formative assessment in the classroom! Our goal is to focus on a few flexible tools that can help us check for understanding and give actionable feedback to ELLs. Here are a few to try – they’re all linked in the transcript.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supplement a tool such as Zoom with <a href="#">Peardeck</a>, assessing periodically during a lesson to adjust instruction.</li><li>• <a href="#">Kaizena</a> gives students real-time feedback on work they upload. You can use a highlighter or give just-in-time verbal feedback. You can also attach resources.</li><li>• <a href="#">Adobe Express</a> lets you add visuals and graphics to exit tickets.</li><li>• <a href="#">Typeform</a> is a free online poll creator that allows you to add graphic elements to quick assessments.</li></ul>
CLH	<p>Technology to the rescue!</p> <p>Think about Session 3 with the Chinese mathematical proof and the types of scaffolds we would need to solve that problem. Fortunately, many of our students are at a higher level with their English than we are with our Chinese language. Your ELLs definitely vary depending on their proficiency levels, background knowledge, and prior experience with this content. What might be the perfect modification for one</p>

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	assessment may not be appropriate for another. You may also remove these scaffolds as your ELLs progress in their language development.
GK	<p>Here are a few ideas on how to scaffold assessment for a wide range of English level proficiencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Read directions to all sections of an assessment orally to the whole class or a small group of ELLs. Ask if there are any questions and elaborate before students begin the assessment.</li><li>● Model or provide sample answers to the first item of each assessment section.</li><li>● Add pictures or visuals to the directions or items to aid in comprehension.</li><li>● Allow students to complete the assessment in a different modality, such as through oral language instead of written, with multimedia, or drawing.</li><li>● Have students complete the assessment in pairs or small groups.</li><li>● Simplify – or amplify – the language of the items, while ensuring they are clear:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Avoid negation and dependent clauses</li><li>○ Provide fewer multiple choice options</li><li>○ Define terms in context</li><li>○ Remove extraneous information</li></ul></li><li>● Allow ELLs to complete only the odd or even items for assessment.</li><li>● Provide a differentiated rubric for ELLs which is shared in advance of the assessment.</li><li>● Provide a word bank; include additional words for increased challenge, depending on proficiency</li><li>● Include sentence stems so that ELLs know where to begin.</li><li>● Allow ELLs to revise and resubmit based on initial feedback before grading.</li><li>● Encourage students to use their full linguistic repertoire.</li><li>● Evaluate only the language, such as spelling features, vocabulary, verb tense, and sentence structures that you have explicitly taught previously.</li></ul>
CLH	Now it's your turn! In your workbook, think through the assessments you use and how they can be modified to assess the content understanding of ELLs. In Sessions 6 and

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7, we will continue to explore how to use ELLs' home languages to more accurately assess student understanding in order to support their oral and written class participation in virtual learning.

The goal of the TALE Academy is to help teachers rethink education so that everyone – students, families, educators, school leaders, and communities – all have the opportunity to succeed. You've just added another tool to your toolbox when you assess your ELLs' understanding and progress.

Thanks for listening!