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Toward an Enhanced Language Assessment System

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Citizenship and Immigration Canada
BUILDING A STRONGER CANADA



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CIC Assessment Practices

- At present, CIC conducts language assessment in the following manner:
- **Placement:** Before entering training at one of LINC's eight levels (pre-LINC Literacy to LINC 7) or ELT, students receive a placement assessment. Most placement occurs at centralized assessment centres, where trained language assessors deliver one of several standardized placement tests (e.g. CLBA, CLBPT, ELTPA).
- **Progress:** Once training has begun, teachers conduct ongoing assessments of their students using a variety of tools, some of their own making.
- **Outcomes:** To date, placement and progress assessment tools have been used as indicators of program results.



LINC: Current Situation

Placement

**LINC
Assessment
Centres
deliver
standardized,
CLB-based
placement
tests**



Progress

**No
standardized
system for
performance
measurement
data**
(teachers use a
variety of tools,
some of their
own making)



Outcomes

**No
standardized
outcomes
test**



Vision for a Two-part Assessment System

Part 1: Progress Assessment Language Portfolios

Purposes

- ❖ Measuring program performance
- ❖ Motivating and empowering students
- ❖ Contributing to a standard curriculum
- ❖ Supporting professional development of teachers



Part 1: Progress Assessment Language Portfolios

Description

- Teachers and students work together to set goals and compile evidence of student progress
- Rooted in the Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 and based on Manitoba's Collaborative Language Portfolio Assessment (CLPA) model
- Results facilitate promotion of students from one training level to the next
- Unlike a language test, a portfolio takes a broad, cumulative approach to assessment, enabling measurement of a student's increasing grasp non-language program content (e.g. Essential Skills, Canadian civics, values, job search skills, etc.)



Part 2: Outcomes Assessment

CLB-Based Language Milestone Test

Purposes

- ❖ Providing reliable data to support outcomes analysis
- ❖ Motivating students
- ❖ Over time, providing proof of language proficiency required for post-secondary study, employment, professional certification, etc. (“credentializing”)



Part 2: Outcomes Assessment

CLB-Based Language Milestone Test

Description

- Standardized, made-in-Canada test(s) based on the CLB
- Voluntary in nature – open to newcomers (enrolled in CIC training or not) wishing to demonstrate their achievement
- Ultimately, language credential intended to facilitate the flow of newcomers into education/training and the labour market by providing a recognized, portable credential
- Testing to focus on two important transition points, or language learning milestones:
 1. Completion of basic stage of learning (mastery of CLB 4)
 2. Readiness for enrolment in post-secondary study and higher-level bridge training programs, or for seeking employment and/or professional certification. (CLB levels 7-9, depending on what is required for a newcomer's chosen pathway)



Summary

Placement

LINC
Assessment
Centres
deliver
standardized,
CLB-based
placement
tests



Progress

Portfolio
System



Outcomes

CLB-based
Language
Milestone
Test



Challenges in implementing a portfolio system

- **Instructor training:** Portfolio system dependent upon highly competent instructors with an expanded assessment role
- **Standardization for reliability:** How to ensure portfolio “scores” are consistent across a diverse program? How to ensure validity against the CLB framework?
- **Capturing results:** How will program performance data be collected and analyzed?



Challenges in implementing a CLB-based Language Milestone Test

- **Assessor training:** Like any test, assessors will require specific training to administer the final product.
- **“Wash-back”:** Need to mitigate against temptation for teachers to “teach to the test,” thereby giving short shrift to non-language program content.
- **Test security:** Because the test could be used as a high-stakes test under certain conditions, there could be a higher risk that test content could be compromised. Security measures, such as multiple versions and an “evergreen” bank of test questions would be required of any institution “holding” the test.



Next Steps

- ❖ Continue work with Canadian expert to develop prototype for language portfolio and plan for rolling it out.
- ❖ Develop a prototype for CLB-based Language Milestone Test and plan for validation and implementation.
- ❖ In both cases, it is expected that prototypes will be completed by end of this fiscal year, with pilot projects beginning next fiscal year.



A Request

We are eager to receive your comments and suggestions about our proposal.

Please feel free to contact us:

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Thank You • Merci

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