

# Beyond the Score

## Assessment in the Adult ESOL Classroom

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## **Introduction**

### **Background Information on my Interest in Assessment**

For the past three years, I have worked as an ESOL teacher at Second Start in Concord. I teach a diverse population of new Americans. From Basra to Kinshasa, the hometowns of my students are as varied as their previous educational experiences. I'm currently teaching a High Beginning level class. I'm following a new curriculum written by Second Start teachers as part of a JEPD project completed in Spring 2015. Within this project, we touched on assessment, but did not focus on it.

When I started the school year in September 2015 with my new curriculum in hand, I was again reminded of the necessity of effective assessment in my classroom. After I administered the CASAS test during the second week of classes, many of my students asked me for their scores, hoping to chart their progress through those scores. At that point, I knew that the scores would not be a good indicator of student progress through the new curriculum because CASAS does not measure all areas of study. This sparked my interest in researching different kinds of assessments that I could use to inform my instruction, track student progress, and inspire my students to assess themselves.

Prior to this project, I tried different ways of assessing my students. I administered monthly multiple choice quizzes on vocabulary and grammar skills. I also collected student work and compiled portfolios for students to show progress over time. I never felt that these assessments were very effective. Many students struggled with taking the quizzes. After I handed the graded quizzes back, the students looked at their incorrect answers and then filed them away in their binders. Organizing the portfolios was a lot of work on my part, and they were taken home at the end of the year without much interest and excitement. It didn't seem like students were benefiting from these activities.

I applied for the JEPD Individual Study grant to learn more about assessment in the adult ESOL classroom and to experiment with what I learned. My project consisted of 4 activities: reviewing current literature and professional development sources on assessment, creating assessments for my classroom use, reflecting on the effectiveness of the assessments and revising them accordingly, and reporting on my findings in a written summary. This report summarizes my work on this project in four parts: this introduction, a review of the literature on

assessment in the ESOL classroom that I consulted, a journal that I kept from January through May 2016, and attachments including my assessments and rubrics.

## **Assessment in the Adult ESOL Classroom**

### **Literature Summary**

At Second Start, we use the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) test to organize ESOL students into leveled classes and to report on their progress to the National Reporting System (NRS). As such, our students are tested three times per academic year, in the fall, winter and spring. They complete a multiple choice reading test and a multiple choice listening test. There is always a certain energy in the classroom on CASAS testing days. Some students are excited to take the test and improve their scores. Others express worry that they won't perform as well as they would like. The test takes an entire three hour class period, and students leave exhausted, relieved that it's over, and curious about their results.

The CASAS was created in the 1980s to test over 300 competencies and to correlate results to a skill level as described on a scale. The questions are related to everyday activities including working, shopping, conversing with neighbors, driving and map reading, and others. Used to measure program effectiveness and student improvement, the CASAS is one of many standardized tests used to evaluate ESOL students. The CASAS test does not test all of the material that my students learn in the classroom. Nor does it show all that my students can do. As such, "...standardized tests have limitations. Their results will have meaning to learners and teachers only if the test content is related to the goals and content of instruction" (Van Duzer 2002).

Given the limitations of the CASAS test, what are some effective ways to assess ESOL students' progress in the classroom? The New Horizons Foundation produced an instructional video, "Assessing Learning in the Adult ESL Classroom," that showcases a variety of assessments. From a thumbs-up activity to check for understanding, to a classroom art project that requires using new vocabulary words, to a collaborative writing assignment, assessments in the adult ESOL classroom take many forms. Unlike "testing" which produces data on performance at a particular time, "assessment is a comprehensive process of planning, collecting, analyzing, reporting, and using information on students over time. Assessment can include tests as well as projects, anecdotal information, and student self-reflection" (Gottlieb 85-85). While multiple-choice tests can be used in an overall assessment plan, the literature on assessment points to different, or alternative assessment models. "Alternative assessment consists of any method of finding out what a student knows or can do that is intended to show

growth and inform instruction” (O’Malley 1). According to O’Malley and Valdez Pierce, alternative assessments show what students have learned from instruction, how they can use what they have learned, and what gaps remain. The results of such assessments steer both teachers and learners in the direction of further instruction to close those gaps. Examples of alternative assessments include performance-based tasks, student portfolios and self-assessment activities.

Having experimented with student portfolios last year, I decided to read more about performance assessments. Valdez Pierce underscores that performance-based assessments move “beyond paper and pencil tests” and require that students “do something to demonstrate that they can use the language and content” (Virtual Seminar). These activities can include an oral presentation, a group project, participation in a class discussion, or even following the teacher’s instructions. These activities become assessments when they are used by teachers and students to gauge student learning in the classroom. “Assessment should provide the students with opportunities to construct responses and to apply their learning to problems that mirror their classroom activities in authentic ways” (O’Malley 10). With a performance assessment, the student knows the criteria for evaluation and then performs a specific task. The instructor evaluates the performance, by making observations and/or using a scoring tool, and shares the results with the student. These results could be in the form of a rubric, checklist or teacher notes. The scoring tool begins a conversation between teacher and student about what the student accomplished and what steps he or she should take to achieve the learning goals.

Assessments can be formative or summative, depending on the timing and the use of the results. Much of the literature about ESOL assessment focusses on formative assessment which is “a planned process in which teachers or students use assessment-based evidence to adjust what they’re doing” (Popham 6). Formative assessments help teachers design their lesson plans, adjusting topics and timing based on student results. Further, these assessments help students determine what they know and can do, what they need to learn and whether their individual learning strategies are working. Formative assessments are part of an overall plan and integrated into classroom activities, unlike summative assessments that test what students know at the end of chapter or unit. Research has shown that “formative assessment has greatest impact on student learning and achievement” (LINCS Formative Assessment). Throughout this process, students are learning how to learn and how to assess their own learning, skills that will help them in the classroom and beyond.

Self-assessment, by both teachers and students, is a critical component of effective assessment. For teachers, formative assessment results can raise questions about the material, methods, and planning. Teachers need to think critically about their decisions and make adjustments based on student performance. At the same time, students “are equally important users of formative assessment information” and need to see what they can do to improve their own learning (Chappuis). Students should be asking and answering three important questions: “Where am I going, Where am I now? And How can I close the gap?” (Chappuis). This isn’t easy, especially if students are not accustomed to evaluating themselves and how they learn. Teachers can assist students in this process by creating formative assessments that encourage self assessment and reflection. For example, a teacher may have a student evaluate her own work before they meet to discuss it. Or, a teacher may ask a class for help in creating a rubric so that students can think more about learning topics and how they are performing.

While the readings and online sources provided a lot of background information about assessment and the research behind it, I didn’t find a source that provided specific guidance on assessment in a classroom setting similar to mine. Much of the literature assumes a higher level of English proficiency, as well as students who have more academic experience. This year I teach a High Beginning ESOL class with students of varying educational backgrounds. In addition, as adult learners, my students have busy lives and personal demands that often affect their attendance. My class has been an especially inconsistent one this year. Students have started school at different times, missed classes, suddenly dropped out of school, and some have come back to school when time their schedules changed.

So how do you assess students with limited English proficiency and sporadic attendance? With regards to attendance, Daniel Holt acknowledges the challenges of assessing adult learners in family literacy projects because work and family commitments often prevent students from doing schoolwork and coming to class. From a program perspective, he recommends periodic assessments rather than pre-tests and post-tests to gauge student progress. In this way, the assessments provide more information on the obstacles that may be impacting student progress and attendance. In “More Curriculum Structure: A Response to ‘Turbulence,’ ” John Strucker addresses the issue of poor attendance with a call for more structure on the part of teachers. He recommends that teachers follow syllabi, use textbooks and plan their classes in predictable ways. While Strucker doesn’t speak to the issue of assessment, his framework suggests that assessment should be part of an overall plan that students know. “The structure would not only help those learners with attendance problems, it

would also help those who attend regularly because their progress would no longer be determined by those who attend sporadically” (Strucker).

While my class attendance fluctuated, the language level of my students also became lower as the year progressed. When I began this project, I worried that my students wouldn’t understand the language of assessment. To the issue of assessing lower level English language learners, Valdez Pierce in her Virtual Seminar recommends using scaffolding. An assessment is not effective if students cannot understand what they need to do to complete it. She suggests using simplified language, pictures, organizers and models to make the assessment accessible to all students. The scaffolding enables students to show a teacher what they can do.

At the start of this project, I thought of assessment as the CASAS or other standardized tests, multiple choice quizzes or a graded essay. These kinds of activities aren’t even included in a recent compilation produced by TESOL, New Ways of Classroom Assessment. Similar to the New Horizons video, this is a rich resource of assessment activities to evaluate the four skills, at every level. From a supermarket vocabulary game, to a newspaper activity, to journaling activities, the alternative assessments are described in detail with suggestions for scoring. I did not replicate any of the activities in my classroom, but the book certainly inspired me to think creatively about assessment. An assessment can take so many forms. Effective assessment in the ESOL classroom happens at various points within the instruction, and actually impacts the course of instruction and student learning. Regardless of the type, “in all cases, assessment should be instructive, challenging, engaging, and even enjoyable” (O’Malley 62).



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## **My Project Journal**

**January 2016**

### **Starting and Planning the Process**

I was excited to begin my project. I started reading about assessment and planning right away. But, I felt that implementing a plan would be challenging. So as soon as we returned from vacation, I focused on building my class into a team, all of us engaged in the same project. According to our school calendar, health and food were the themes for January and February. I knew that food would be a great entry point into assessment because it's generally a high-interest topic. Past experience had shown me that some of the quietest students really open up when talking about food. I approached the unit by designing a survey for the class to tell me what they wanted to learn. I wanted to start the project with a basic, self reflective activity. After they filled out the survey, we had a discussion and realized the most students didn't know about American measures related to food and everyone agreed that they wanted to learn food vocabulary. They weren't interested in learning about restaurants and ordering at restaurants as most didn't go out to eat.

My next step was to present my project as a way for students to see their progress from January to May. There were only five students in class when I talked about my JEPD project. All seemed willing, but uncertain about the details. I was unsure as well and told them we would be working together as a team. Next, I designed an assessment related to food to see what students could do - a "pretest" - to further help me design lessons based on students' needs. I conducted oral interviews with the five students in class that day and asked them a series of questions related to food. Then, I had them ask me questions and explain how they prepare food at home. (See attachment 1) I scored these interactions using a rubric that I designed. (attachment 2)

All of the research that I was doing about assessments stressed the importance of sharing rubric results with students (Valdez Pierce Virtual Seminar 2016). My rubric was far too complicated for my students to understand. I realized that I had tried to do too much with it. I had evaluated too many areas as well as areas that I wasn't going to teach. I used it for the assessment but revised it immediately afterwards. In her virtual seminar, Valdez Pierce stated that rubrics should be used to score only those areas that are taught in the classroom.

“Creativity” and other such topics - such as my “maintains eye contact” - should not be scored if they are not taught material (Valdez Pierce Virtual Seminar). Since I wasn’t planning on devoting classroom time to maintaining eye contact, I deleted that category from the rubric. This is one of the changes I made to simplify and clarify the rubric.

At this point, I still wasn’t sure how to explain the rubric score to my students. In her Virtual Seminar, Valdez Pierce emphasized that formative assessments are not about giving grades, rather you are evaluating and giving feedback so that students can move toward the learning targets. She recommends referring to rubrics and checklists as “scoring guides.” These guides should be shared with students prior to the assessment so they can see what they need to do and how they are being evaluated. Students can even help to design these guides to strengthen their engagement with the activity (Litz).

Based on the pretest, I determined that our listening and speaking performance goals would include asking and answering questions related to food. I identified that three of my five students had trouble asking questions about food. Their questions were incomprehensible. Also, building vocabulary was another performance goal. One student told me during the assessment that she wanted to learn the English words for fruits and vegetables, and others expressed that interest when we started doing vocabulary games. Finally, aligned with our curriculum, I wanted students to be able to give directions orally. We would be studying the imperative form and I decided to do this in the form of sharing a recipe, knowing that this skill could be used in many other ways such as giving driving directions.

With these goals in mind for January and February, I designed several lessons and activities for January to work on building vocabulary and to practice asking and answering questions related to food. These included repeating questions with scaffolded opportunities to create original questions, a game to organize word cards to make questions, pairwork of asking and answering questions related to food, and grammar practice for homework that require creating and answering questions.

Early in my process, I realized that student attendance would affect my ability to measure student progress. Of the five students who I pretested in early January, two students withdrew from school in late January, and two others had poor attendance. I noted that the students who I assessed later in February may or may not have benefited from the classroom work related to the performance goals. Most were not pretested in early January and hadn’t heard one of the several explanation I gave of my project. For those students, the assessment was a snapshot of their performance at a certain point in time, rather than evidence of what they

gained from a month of instruction. They benefited from the experience of completing the activity. Further their results helped me gather information about their learning needs which helped guide my plans for February.

## **February 2016**

### **Giving Feedback - Using a Rubric and Sharing Results**

As part of my overall instructional plan, I planned two assessments for January and February including a performative formative assessment based on the a “What’s in Your Refrigerator” class activity and another performative assessment that was both formative and summative to end our food unit.

I designed the first performance assessment to be very similar to an activity that we had done together in class. Students created questions and worked in pairs to ask and answer them. This was a scaffolded activity, with complete questions, fill-in-the blank questions and some opportunities for them to create entire questions. (See attachment 3) I planned to have students work in pairs. I would walk around the classroom and score students’ listening and speaking skills on a rubric. When I handed out the scaffolded activity, my students’ attention focused on the page and filling it out. Several weren’t sure what to do and the majority of the class required a lot of help. I decided that I could not score their interactions because so much of the work was done as a group learning experience. After they completed the activity, I changed course for the rest of the class period. We reviewed the question and answer activity in an interactive way with students asking and answering questions.

I didn’t see the experience as a failed assessment. Instead, because I saw several students struggling with the activity, I switched gears and used the rest of the class period to practice question form. All of the students benefited from more review. After class, I decided to slightly revise the assessment and give it to the students again at our next class. Since the students had seen it once, I figured that they would be able to complete it independently and with less confusion. That’s what did happen. When I gave the assessment to my class two days later, students worked independently to create the questions within the scaffolded framework. They worked in pairs and I was able to listen to each student and score his/her performance. After a short break, I reviewed with the class how to read the rubric and gave them their results. At that moment, I circulated and talked to each student about his/her performance as scored on the rubric. I gave them suggestions for improving their skills and answered questions that they

had about their skills. Overall, the students thanked me for the feedback and seemed to understand the rubric. I planned to modify the rubric and reuse it to assess other skills later in the month.

This was my first experience sharing a rubric with my students. Prior to this project, I had used a rubric to assess student writing, but I hadn't shared the results with students because of the density of the text and complexity of the rubric. When planning this assessment, I created a rubric specifically for my listening and speaking objectives and again I struggled with how I was going to explain the rubric with my students. "If the scoring guide is above students' reading level, you might want to create a student-friendly version" (Chappius). I met with my colleague and mentor teacher Susan Bubp and she suggested having 2 rubrics - a rubric I use to score the performances and a student rubric used to deliver the results to student (attachments 4 and 5). The student rubric was simplified, without the descriptive text, and an understandable scale of "not yet," "good," "better," and "best."

As we continued practicing question form, I introduced two additional learning objectives specifically related to listening and speaking skills: food preparation vocabulary and giving directions related to food preparation. We did a variety of classwork that included reading and discussing food preparation, writing about food preparation, preparing a dessert together in class, and talking about the food preparation that we all do at home. All of this coursework culminated in a final performance assessment that was both formative and summative. I asked students to write a recipe for a favorite food and then present it to the class by first listing the ingredients and then giving the instructions. I modeled a presentation several times and asked students to practice their presentations for homework. This assessment was formative because I wanted to use the results to plan future lessons. It was also summative because it required students to reflect on and use all of the vocabulary and skills that we studied together in class in January and February. Those skills included using question form, sequencing, and giving directions using the imperative form.

On the last class prior to February vacation, four students presented their recipes. I suggested that they have their written recipes with them, but try to speak as much from memory as possible. Scaffolding is a way to "reduce the language demand" and provide additional support to the student (Valdez Pierce Virtual Seminar). Three of the four students completed the assessment without referring to their written recipes. After each presentation, I asked audience members to ask a question or two to the presenter. I scored the presenter on his or her ability to answer the questions and the audience members on their questions posed. I used a rubric to

evaluate the presentations and again used a simplified rubric to deliver the results to the students. (attachments 6 and 7)

I met with each student individually to read the rubric together. The students seemed to appreciate the concrete feedback on how to improve their listening and speaking, specifically related to question form, food vocabulary and giving directions. Using the rubric as a starting point, I talked to each student and pointed out what they did well and what they could do to improve other aspects of his/ her performance. The conversations were brief but fruitful. Some students asked questions, all listened intently. I felt like these exchanges were much more meaningful and productive than past conversations about graded multiple choices tests that I have given. The latter conversations were about correct answers and student disappointment about missing something. These rubric conversations were about improving learning, not about correcting an answer.

At this moment, I felt myself growing as a teacher. While I had always been assessing students in my mind, I was now sharing my thoughts, observations and suggestions with them at the right time. The activity was a “speed bump,” causing us to slow down, assess where we were, and talk about where we would go from there. I had been skeptical when I first read James Popham’s Transformative Assessment. I thought that he was overstating when he wrote, “what this assessment approach to evidence-based decision making can do, of course, is *transform* the way a teacher teaches” (Popham 142). During those conferences with students, I felt like my students and I were working together. I was listening to them. They were listening to me. Together we were engaged in a process. We were transforming together.

### **March and April 2016**

#### **Students Assessing Themselves**

Moving into March, our school-wide theme was financial literacy. There are so many possible avenues of study and our Second Start curriculum doesn’t require any one topic. Just as I had started my food unit with a questionnaire for students about their preferences, I introduced this unit with a needs assessment. (attachment 8) This assessment required that students reflect on what they could and couldn’t do with regards to money, shopping, and banking. I designed this assessment for two purposes: to gather information to plan lessons

and content, and to encourage student to reflect on what they know and what they want to know.

After the students completed the needs assessment, I wrote a plan on the board of financial literacy topics that we would study: shopping, budgeting, banking and credit cards. I thought about these topics within a progression and mapped out how I would evaluate students' skills. In January and February, I focused on evaluating listening and speaking skills. So for March and April, I decided to assess reading and writing skills, specifically related to budgeting. In addition, because our theme was financial literacy, I wanted to assess students' numeracy skills. I wanted to make sure that they could read and write prices, along with count and add money. During a previous class, a student told me that she wanted to learn how to count coins. That student was still in my class, so that's where we began our unit.

Moving into March, I again reflected on the impact of student attendance and Second Start's open-enrollment policy on my project. When I made a chart of the completed assessments with students' scores, I realized that I didn't have a single student who completed all of the assessments to date. (attachment 9) Also there wasn't a student in my class with perfect attendance. My class was and continued to be "turbulent." Because of absences, students were missing some - or most - of the material and practice. Considering the attendance, I questioned the validity of the assessment scores as indicators of learning in the classroom. But, I kept referring back to John Strucker's article on how teachers should respond to absenteeism and his call for more structure. My assessments were part of my class structure and those students who regularly attended were able to practice the material in class and at home and be prepared. For students with infrequent attendance, they saw what they could do on a day that they attended. Maybe they were even inspired by other students who more regularly attended class and who were better able to do task at hand.

I hoped that my students were starting to make these kinds of connections between attendance and progress, and studying and performance. I was certainly thinking critically about my students' learning. I wanted them to be doing that as well. "In giving students descriptive feedback, you [the teacher] have modeled the kind of thinking you want them to do as self-assessors. As a next step, turn that task over to students and guide them in practicing self assessment" (Chappius). I decided to have students assess themselves for my final two assessments in April.

In preparing for our lessons on budgeting, our class created a vocabulary list based on readings and classroom discussion. This is something that I've done countless times and in the



past have given monthly multiple choice quizzes on the word lists. In April, because of this project, I approached the vocabulary quiz differently. I gave my students a complete word list and asked them how they planned to learn the new words. My question was met with silence. Prior to this, I had never asked my students about their specific study plans. I had assumed that they had ways of studying that worked for them. But, this project was teaching me that students need assistance in planning next steps. The goal of learning the words wasn't enough. Some of my students really needed me to walk alongside of them and guide them toward their goal.

Over the course of the next three classes, I introduced several study strategies for students to use to master new vocabulary. First, all of the students made flashcards. Since no one was familiar with this strategy, we used classroom time for everyone to prepare their flashcards. Then I demonstrated how to use the cards and asked students to show me that they could use them. At our next class, we continued our discussion by having students describe how and when they used the flashcards. One student said that the cards didn't work for her. So I suggested that students write sentences using the vocabulary words. Then, this student did something very interesting. For the word "budget," she made a personal budget, listing her income and expenses. I'm sure that she'll remember that word based on that experience. We also played a couple of vocabulary games during class that were met with enthusiasm.

In the beginning of April, I gave a short quiz on the new vocabulary that we had been reviewing in class and for homework. (attachment 10) Of the eight students who took the quiz, three reported that it was easy, three said that it was both easy and difficult, and two classified it as difficult. I didn't collect the quizzes or correct them. I took notice of the problems that students were having and after 45 minutes, we corrected the quiz together. Students came to the board to share their answers, both correct and incorrect. Students asked questions and corrected each other's mistakes. Immediately after, I asked the students to complete a self-assessment that I designed to elicit responses about their thoughts about their learning techniques and study strategies. (attachment 11) I wanted students to tell me how they learned best. I wanted them to think about their learning strategies so that they could use these methods in the future. I aimed for my students to get to a metacognitive level, that is to learn about their own learning. "Metacognition is the ability to use prior knowledge to plan a strategy for approaching a learning task, take necessary steps to problem solve, reflect on and evaluate results, and modify one's approach as needed" (TEAL Fact Sheet).

When I handed out the self-assessment, I saw many puzzled faces. I'm not sure that most of my students knew what to make of it. So we worked on it as a group activity, going line

by line, and allowing time for each student to check “yes,” “no,” or “some.” When we got to the statement, “I used other ways to study the new words,” one student volunteered that she used her dictionary to help her study. Her addition to the discussion got the ball rolling, and others volunteered that they used their dictionaries at home when they studied new words. Another student even shared that he writes down words he doesn’t know and the definitions in a special notebook and reviews it regularly. I facilitated the conversation, but the students were talking to each other, teaching and sharing study skills. What a great moment! Again, our conversation was about study skills to use in the future. Students didn’t seem disappointed about incorrect answers on day’s vocabulary quiz. They were focussed on planning for future success.

Throughout the financial literacy unit, we had been talking about income, expenses, and budgets. As a whole group and in pairs, the students created budgets using provided information. They collected information from readings and by asking questions. For a summative assessment, I planned a reading and writing assessment that consisted of making a budget using their vocabulary knowledge and numeracy skills. I also created a self assessment so that students could reflect on the usefulness of a budget in their own lives. (attachments 12 and 13) Unfortunately, we did not have enough class time before April vacation to dedicate to the activity. I was afraid to wait until after vacation because I felt that the assessment would no longer be relevant. So I assigned the assessment as homework.

This instance of a “time crunch” caused me to reflect on assessment and flexibility. April was an especially busy month at Second Start. We planned and had our annual Celebration of Learning. We tried something new this year and all of the students created group projects and presentations. All of this required over 10 hours of class time. Our time was well spent, but it meant less time for financial literacy. In addition to this, we had our final Connections book club which included a book discussion lead by an outside facilitator. We devoted three hours to that activity. These events were important reminders to me that learning happens in many situations, and that classroom curriculum needs to be put aside when there are opportunities for other enriching educational experiences.

Still, I was disappointed that I had to send the budget activity home. I wanted to observe my students doing the activity. I also wanted to have class time to reflect as a group on their learning processes. Five students completed it at home, and all of them responded that they didn’t have any further questions about budgets. When I passed back their budgets, I emphasized the learning that happened during the financial literacy unit. I reminded the class that no one even knew the definition of budget at the beginning of the unit. Not only did they

learn the meaning, but also they created budgets and said that they would make budgets in the future. I underscored their progress and they recognized it. But would my students remember this experience? Would they think of the budget activity as evidence of progress in the same way they do their CASAS scores?

## **May 2016**

### **My Final Reflections**

When I began this project in January, I hoped to deflect students' attention away from their CASAS scores to more accurate measures of their performance related to classroom objectives and content. My results certainly looked different from CASAS scores. I didn't have an improvement of three points, or a student "jumping up" a level. I didn't even have grades or percentages correct. What I did have were rubrics, student self-assessments and my notes and comments. These were my evidence of learning and growth, by my students and myself.

Unlike the CASAS test, my assessments were learning opportunities. My students and I learned what they could do. We also learned what they couldn't do and we talked about strategies for reaching those goals. Wow! This experiment really changed the way that I thought about assessment. I had always thought of a test as a way to check understanding of content. A score proves if the student knows the material. I hadn't considered a test - like my financial literacy vocabulary quiz - as a potential learning activity. After taking the quiz, my students reflected on their study skills and methods. They talked about what worked and what didn't. On that day, they looked beyond the scores and understood something about themselves as students.

Although I began this project looking to track my students' progress, I probably saw the most progress in myself as a teacher. Before this project, I had been listening to my students, assessing them in my mind, and planning material based on what I saw they could do. So I was regularly assessing them. But, I kept all of this to myself. I wasn't sharing my thoughts and observations, asking students to reflect on their own learning, or stopping to make a plan with my students to chart our course together. I began these new practices because of my research and experimentation associated with this project. Next year, I will continue to experiment with different kinds of assessments and integrating them into my curriculum plan.

Just as I was growing as a teacher, my students were taking steps toward becoming more independent learners. In mid April, I watched in amazement as one of my students flipped

through her flashcards before class. Before April vacation, another student volunteered that she was making a budget for herself. "It's good," she said. I think my students benefited from the self-assessment opportunities and time for reflection. When students have time to consider what works for them and how they learn, they develop the skills that they can use both inside and outside of the classroom. I will include even more self-assessment activities into my plan for next year.

My results did show students succeeding, trying to improve, and thinking about their learning. But a score is easy to remember, and I'm afraid that a rubric and a conversation could be forgotten. Looking ahead to next year, my assessments could become components of a student portfolio. "A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that is intended to show progress over time." (O'Malley 14) Along with the assessments, a student could choose writing and other work to put in her portfolio. In a way, the student would be assessing her/his own learning by the very process of creating the portfolio. I have tried student portfolios in the past and was frustrated by the time it took me to organize them. But, in that case, I was making the portfolios. If I try the portfolios again in the future, I will assign that job to the students.

To further show change over time, I will need make some adjustments in how I design and schedule my assessments. I will need to collect results for a longer period. Also, I will need to check the same skills with the same rubrics at different intervals. In that way, I could compare a performance in September to a similar one in January to one in June. All of this can become part of the student's portfolio.

Depending on classroom "turbulence," some student portfolios will be thick, and others will be thin. While this year's class was an especially "turbulent" one, I anticipate attendance issues next year as well. At Second Start, the ESOL students are juggling responsibilities of work, family, life and school. Some students attend regularly. Others disappear after a few weeks. If I experiment with portfolios next year, I expect that some will reflect sustained, complete work with meaningful assessments, and others will be nearly empty. There isn't a perfect solution to this problem. I need to be hopeful that students will attend as regularly as their lives permit.

For my students and myself, this project was yet another reminder of the importance of being flexible. Assessments need to be frequent events in the course of instruction. But, as I learned in April, teaching comes from many sources and other educational opportunities might disrupt well-conceived plans. Guest speakers, field trips and special events enhance the ESOL experience at Second Start. Looking ahead to next year, I will integrate assessments in my

overall planning, but I will be need to be flexible. In addition, students bring material to the classroom that is important to them and their lives. For example, a student told me that she couldn't count the change in her pocket, so we spent two classes learning about money and counting it. We got sidetracked, but the students learned a lot. So, I need to create assessments as we go along. They need to be timely, relevant, and real opportunities for learning.

During the second week of May, I administered the CASAS test for the third and final time this year. As always, there was a particular energy in the classroom that morning. As I passed out the booklets and answer sheets, I started in with my usual speech about how students just need to do their best and not to worry about the scores too much. But this time, I had a lot more to add! I reminded my class that they had demonstrated what they could do through our classroom assessments. Some students presented recipes to the class in February. Other students breezed through a vocabulary quiz in March, characterizing it as "easy." In April, several students created a budget with given information. These were concrete examples of what my students had learned and accomplished this spring. "Look beyond the CASAS score," I told them, "and focus on what you've done, where you're going, and what you need to do to get there." At that, I instructed them to open their test booklets. They did so with focused determination.

Attachment 1 - Listening/speaking assessment

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Let's Talk about Grocery Shopping**

1. Do you like grocery shopping?
2. Why or Why not?
3. Where do you go grocery shopping?
4. How often do you go grocery shopping?
5. Why do you go to \_\_\_\_\_?
6. What fruits and vegetables do you buy?
7. What meats do you buy?
8. What drinks do you buy?
9. How much \_\_\_\_\_ do you buy?
10. How much money do you spend on food every week?
11. What is the most expensive item you buy? How much is it?
12. What is the cheapest item you buy? How much is it?
13. What is your favorite food?
14. How do you make your favorite food? Tell me the steps.

Now ask me 3 questions about how I go grocery shopping.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Attachment 2 - Initial Listening/Speaking rubric (before revisions)

<b>Listening</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Understands simple Yes/No questions	Requests repetition  lack of response/ response indicates lack of understanding	may request repetition  response indicates at least partial understanding of question	appropriate response reflects understanding	
Understands simple Wh-questions	may not understand what to do/ cannot complete  Requests repetition	Response indicates at least partial understanding of the question  may request repetition	appropriate response reflects understanding	
Maintains eye contact	Not at all	sometimes	At all times	

Attachment 2 - Initial Listening/Speaking rubric (before revisions) - continued

Speaking	1	2	3	Comments
Produces simple Y/N questions and WH questions	May not understand what to do/ cannot complete  Questions do not make sense	Produces questions with some mistakes that detract from meaning	Questions are clear and appropriate to the conversation	
Produces simple directions	May not understand what to do/ cannot complete	Produces directions with some mistakes that detract from meaning	directions are clear, sequential and with few mistakes	
Produces food vocabulary	May not understand what to do/ cannot complete  Very limited  With many mistakes	Limited vocabulary when talking about food  A lot of repetition	Uses many food vocabulary words fluidly	
Expresses money and quantities	May not understand what to do/ cannot complete	Attempts with mistakes  Meaning is somewhat unclear	Expresses money and quantities correctly the majority of the time	
Speaks with appropriate volume	Not at all	sometimes	At all times	



## What's in your refrigerator?

Directions: Complete the questions below. Then, work with a partner. Ask him/her what's in his/her refrigerator.

Are there any cucumbers in your refrigerator?

Are there any \_\_\_\_\_ in your refrigerator?

Is there \_\_\_\_\_ in your refrigerator?

\_\_\_\_\_ in your refrigerator?

\_\_\_\_\_ ?

\_\_\_\_\_ ?

What is your favorite food in your refrigerator?

What do you need to buy at Market Basket?

How many \_\_\_\_\_ are in your refrigerator?

Where are \_\_\_\_\_ in your refrigerator?

\_\_\_\_\_ ?

Attachment 4 - My listening/speaking rubric

<b>Listening and Speaking</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Understands simple Yes/No questions and WH-questions	lack of response/ response indicates lack of understanding	may request repetition	response indicates at least partial understanding of question	appropriate response reflects understanding
Produces simple Y/N questions and WH questions	may not understand what to do/ cannot complete	produces questions without question format	produces questions with some mistakes	questions are clear and appropriate to the conversation
Understands and produces food vocabulary	may not understand what to do/ cannot complete	limited vocabulary	developing vocabulary	understands and uses many food vocabulary words fluidly

Attachment 5 - Student rubric that correlates to my listening/speaking rubric

Name:

Date:

	<b>NOT YET</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	<b>BETTER</b>	<b>BEST</b>
<b>Understand Questions</b>				
<b>Say Questions</b>				
<b>New Words</b>				

Attachment 6 - My listening/speaking expanded rubric

<b>Listening and Speaking</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Understands simple Yes/No questions and WH-questions	lack of response/ response indicates lack of understanding	may request repetition	response indicates at least partial understanding of question	appropriate response reflects understanding
Produces simple Y/N questions and WH questions	may not understand what to do/ cannot complete	produces questions without question format	produces questions with some mistakes	questions are clear and appropriate to the conversation
Understands and produces food and cooking vocabulary	may not understand what to do/ cannot complete	limited vocabulary	developing vocabulary	understands and uses many food/cooking vocabulary words fluidly
Shares recipe	may not understand what to do/ cannot complete	major sequencing errors and information gaps	sequencing and information given with some mistakes	presents recipe with sequencing and complete information

Attachment 7 - Student rubric that correlates to my expanded listening/speaking rubric

Name:

Date:

	<b>NOT YET</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	<b>BETTER</b>	<b>BEST</b>
<b>Understand Questions</b>				
<b>Say Questions</b>				
<b>New Words</b>				
<b>Share Recipe</b>				

***Here's what I can do:***

	I can't do this.	It's <u>very difficult</u> for me.	It's a <u>little difficult</u> for me.	I can do this. No problem!
Count \$				
Shop for food and clothes				
Use a bank				
Read and pay monthly bills				
Understand credit cards				
Read and write a budget				
Understand identity theft				

I **want** to learn \_\_\_\_\_

I **need** to learn \_\_\_\_\_

## Attachment 9 - My assessment record

Student ID	List/Speak - Pretest 1/21/16	List/Speak "What's in your Refrigerator?" 2/4/16	List/Speak - Recipe Share 2/18/16	Read/Write Numbers 3/1/16	Read/Write Vocab quiz and self assessment	Read/Write Num, vocab Budget
A	X	9/9	11/12	5/9	↓ Reported quiz was easy. Questioned directions on part 3. Used flashcards	↓
B	X	X	X	4/6	↓ Reported quiz was easy. Used flashcards	↓
C	23/24	X	X	4/9	↓ Difficulties with directions. Reported quiz was mid-level. Felt she was unable to learn some of the words.	X
D	18/24	6/9	X	2/9	X	↓ did not complete self assessment.
E	X	7/9	10/12	4/9	X	X
F	X	3/9	4/12	3/9	X	↓ problems with the math
G	X	X	X	6/9	X	X
H	19/24	3/9	4/12	Dropped		
I	22/24	Dropped				
J	18.5/24	Dropped				
K	X	X	X	X	↓ Difficulties with directions. Reported quiz was mid-level.	X
L	X	X	X	X	↓ Reported quiz was difficult. Needed help with directions. Did not finish.	X
M	X	X	X	X	↓ Reported quiz was difficult. Needed help with directions. Did not finish.	X
N	X	X	X	X	↓ Reported quiz was easy. Used flashcards	↓
O	X	X	X	X	↓ Difficulties with directions and content. Reported quiz was mid-level. Just joined classes. Got word list last week.	X
P	X	X	X	X	X	X

↓ = completed  
 X = absent/did not complete

### Financial Literacy Vocabulary Quiz

Name:

A. Directions: Match the word to its definition.

cheap	10 cents (\$.10)
price	small, round metal money
income	the amount that you pay for something
coins	not expensive
dime	money earned or received

B. Directions: Use these words to complete the sentences below.

bills	nickel	afford	budget	savings
income	expensive	quarter	rent	cost of living
price	tuition	very reasonable prices	dime	penny



1. These are dollar \_\_\_\_\_.
2. My \_\_\_\_\_ is \$800 a month for a one bedroom, one bathroom apartment in Concord.
3. College \_\_\_\_\_ is very expensive in the United States.

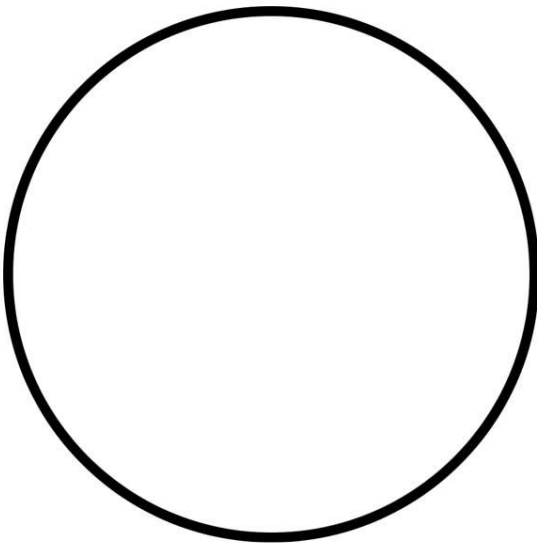


4. A \_\_\_\_\_ is worth 25 cents.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ of milk is \$3.99 a gallon.
6. The money that I don't spend is my \_\_\_\_\_. I'll keep it in the bank and use it in the future.
7. I can \_\_\_\_\_ a new T.V. so I will buy one next week.
8. Walmart has \_\_\_\_\_ for food, clothing and school supplies.

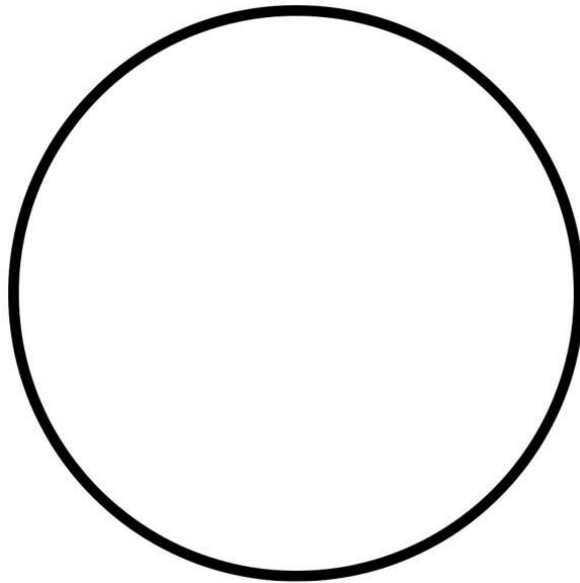
C. Directions: Sort the words into two groups. Write the words inside the circles.

dime	tuition	penny	nickel	rent	dollar bill	quarter
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**Expenses**



**Money**



### How did you learn your new words?

Name:

**Directions:** Read the statements below. Respond by checking ( ✓ ) YES, NO or SOME.

	YES	NO	SOME
I know the new words.			
The flashcards helped me study.			
I wrote sentences to learn the new words.			
I used other ways to study the new words.			

In the future, when I want to learn new words, I will \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

## **Create a Budget**

Directions: Set up a monthly budget for Kelly.

Kelly works 2 jobs. She earns \$800 a month from her job at Market Basket. She also works at the Comfort Inn. She earns \$600 a month. She has many expenses. She pays \$600 for rent and \$200 for food. She also pays \$100 for internet and cell phone, \$20 for electricity, \$20 for water, and \$50 for tuition. She puts the rest of her money in the bank. It is her savings.

## Kelly's Budget

<b>Income</b>		
Total Income		\$
<b>Expenses</b>		
<b>Total Expenses</b>		\$

1.How much money does Kelly spend each month?

2.How much money does she have left over for savings?

### My Ideas about a Budget

Name:

Directions: Read the sentences below. Check YES, NO, or SOME.

	YES	NO	SOME
I learned how to make a budget.			
I liked making a budget.			
I think a budget is helpful.			
In the future, I will make a budget for myself			

Do you still have questions about budgets? YES NO

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