

Outline for 8/22/02:

1. Welcome: Introduce myself and explain my general goals for the course. Pass out the course description handout.
2. Participant introductions: Tell us your name and something that most people don't know about you.
3. Introduce "Discussion as a Way of Teaching" and engage in generating ground rules for discussion (see handout).
4. Brainstorm activity: On sticky notes, write down all of the things that you would like to know about assessment for English language learners. In pairs, compare what you wrote and see if there's anything you would like to add. Then see if you can group them a bit. Then in the whole group, we will share the things that people have written down and cluster them on big pieces of paper. Then, we will try to prioritize the goals and form cooperative learning groups.
5. Collaboratively, set some concrete goals and expectations for the course, participants, and instructor.
6. Reiterate to the group my understandings of their goals and expectations.
7. Set agenda for next week.

BIL ED 593: Topics in Assessment for English Language Learners

Fall 2002

When: Wednesdays: 3/3:30-5:30/6:00 (class will run 2 ½ hours. Exact start time will be negotiated by participants)

Where: East San José Elementary

Who: Julia Scherba de Valenzuela¹, Ph.D. and YOU!!!

The purpose of the course will be to develop a cohesive, collaborative school-based work group around assessment issues for English language learners. The goal is for there to be a team of interested participants from East San José Elementary School and possibly one or two other local schools. The ideal class size would have between 10-20 participants, including general and special educators, ESL and bilingually endorsed teachers, para-professionals, parents, school staff, and administrators.

The instructor for the course, Julia Scherba de Valenzuela, will serve as a facilitator in the development of your assessment team and an assessment process to look at the achievement of English language learners in more authentic ways. She will:

- provide information about different classroom-based assessment techniques;
- assist course participants in identifying and analyzing relevant resources (such as examples of performance-based assessments and relevant articles); and
- provide structure and suggestions for the development of a school-based assessment process.

As East San José Elementary already utilizes portfolio assessment, we can start with that and identify ways to make the process more consistent and meaningful to the teachers, students, administrators, and parents.

Interested participants will need to register for the course through UNM. The call number will be provided before the first day of class. The syllabus, readings and assignments will be developed through discussions with those who enroll in the class, so that those are relevant to your needs and interests. Students will be expected to be responsible for completing readings and assignments, participating and leading group discussions, and researching topics negotiated by the group.

¹ Dr. Scherba de Valenzuela is an Assistant Professor in Special Education at UNM. She teaches in and collaborates with the Bilingual Education Program and faculty regularly. Her training is in linguistics, speech-language pathology, and bilingual special education. She is very interested in alternative assessment and language development of bilingual students and often teaches the *First and Second Language Development* course for the Bilingual Education Program and assessment courses in Special Education.

3. Now form a group with [two or] three other people. Take turns talking about what made discussion groups work well for you. Listen for common themes, shared experiences, and features of conversation that a majority of you would like to see present in this course.

4. Take turns talking about what made discussion group work awful for you. Listen for common themes, shared experiences, and features of conversation that a majority of you would like to see avoided in this course.

5. For each of the characteristics of good discussion you agree on, try to suggest three things a group might do to ensure that these characteristics are present. Be as specific and concrete as you can. For example, if you feel good conversation is developmental, with later themes building on and referring back to earlier ones, you could propose a rule that every new comment made by a participant be prefaced by an explanation as to how it relates to an earlier comment.

6. For each of the characteristics of bad discussion you agree on, try to suggest three things a group might do to ensure that these characteristics are avoided. Be as specific and concrete as you can. For example, if you feel that bad conversation happens when one person's voice dominates, you could propose a rule that someone who has spoken may not make a second comment until at least three other people have been heard (unless asked a direct question by another group member).

7. Try to finish this exercise by drafting a charter for discussion that comprises the specific ground rules you agree on. We will make each group's rules public and use them to develop a charter for discussion to guide the entire class in the coming weeks.

(Brookfield & Preskill², 1999, pp. 54-55)

² Brookfield, S. D., & Preskill, S. (1999). *Discussion as a way of teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Joseey-Bass.