

Evaluation of Instruction: Applying the Eight Components of Sheltered Instruction to Teacher Evaluation Systems

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Promising practices...

Much controversy has surrounded the rollout of new teacher evaluation systems throughout the U.S. in recent years. Contrary to political rhetoric, most teachers do not take issue with being held accountable for their work; they simply want to ensure that the accountability system is valid, reliable, and fair.

Often lost in the current school “reform” debates is the reality of requisite instructional practices that must be implemented in order to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. This is the case even while, for the first time in U.S. history, racial and ethnic minorities form the majority of the public school student population, and English language learners are the fastest growing sub-group of the overall student population (*nces.ed.gov*). The goal of this article is to demonstrate how the *Eight Components of Sheltered Instruction* (see p. 1 of this issue) should inform teacher evaluation standards and competencies. Although much needs to be written about the *Value Added Measurements* many districts have added to their teacher evaluation systems, this article focuses on teacher standards and competencies as they relate to the clinical observation cycle employed in most evaluation systems.

Many local and state education agencies across the country have adopted teacher performance standards that are informed by Charlotte Danielson’s *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* (2nd Ed., 2007). Although not originally intended as a formal teacher evaluation tool, it has become one of the most common resources for development of teacher evaluation systems. While it is an effective tool for identifying the components of “good teaching,” the Danielson Framework and most teacher evaluation systems that rely on it lack direct, explicit, and specific attention to teacher practices that meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The commonly adhered to adage “good teaching is good teaching” does not ring true for the teaching of emerging bilingual students. If that were the case, linguistically and culturally diverse students would not be suffering from such a tremendous gap in achievement with their native-English-speaking peers. The same holds true for teacher evaluation practices. There are specific elements of effective classroom instruction that are generalizable, but in the case of teachers of emerging bilinguals, there are very specific skills related to language and culture that must be the area of focus (Tablet-Cubero in Valdes, Menken and Castro, 2014).

Whether directly based on the Danielson Framework or not, most districts’ teacher evaluation systems include similar standards and competencies and could benefit from a lens that is informed by the Eight Components of Sheltered Instruction and thus reflects the needs of second language learners and culturally diverse students. Included in Table 1 (pp. 7-8) are examples of how these components could inform teacher evaluation standards and competencies. While not intended to be a comprehensive list, these examples represent minimal expectations for all teachers of CLD students in order to meet their students’ distinct academic, linguistic, and cultural needs.

While these examples focus on the application of the Eight Components of Sheltered Instruction to Charlotte Danielson’s *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, school and district leaders should engage in a similar process of analyzing their own teacher standards and competencies through the lens of second language and culturally responsive instruction. Engaging in this process of analyzing and adapting current teacher evaluation standards is essential to ensuring the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students are effectively met and the work of teachers who are skilled at sheltering their instruction is fully acknowledged.

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Table 1

<i>Danielson Framework Element</i>	<i>Component of Sheltering</i>	<i>Instructional Adaptations for Culture and Language</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
<p>Domain 1: Planning and Preparation. Component 1c: Setting Instructional Outcomes. Element: Value, sequence and alignment. Proficient: Most outcomes represent high expectations and rigor and important learning in the discipline. They are connected to a sequence of learning.</p>	<p>1. Focus on language</p>	<p>Teacher develops language objectives that support students to fully access grade level content standards. *Note, to move from a “Proficient” to a “Distinguished” level of performance a teacher would utilize students’ individual language proficiency assessment data to develop differentiated language outcomes for individuals or small groups of students.</p>	<p>Language objectives related to content objectives are essential for language learners for two primary reasons: 1) Students require scaffolding of the academic language of the content in order to comprehend input and produce related linguistic output. 2) Content instruction often provides opportunities to improve students’ language proficiency when planned for in advance.</p>
<p>Domain 3: Instruction. Component 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. Element: Student Participation. Proficient: Teacher successfully engages all students in the discussion.</p>	<p>2. Plan for peer interaction</p>	<p>In order to engage second language learners in class discussions, the teacher provides scaffolding such as sentence frames, visual representations of vocabulary and concepts, graphic organizers, etc. Teacher utilizes grouping techniques that reduce anxiety and foster collaboration among students and provides consistent routines for class discussions. Teacher allows students to negotiate meaning with their classmates in their native language before sharing their thoughts in their second language.</p>	<p>Second language learners cannot be placed in groups and simply given the expectation to participate. They require explicit support with the language structures of the content and language demands of academic conversations. With appropriate language supports, students at all language proficiency levels can then be expected to participate in discussions of cognitively demanding content (Zwiers, 2011).</p>
<p>Domain 3: Instruction. Component 3c: Engaging Students in Learning. Element: Instructional materials and resources. Proficient: Instructional materials and resources are suitable to the instructional purposes and engage students mentally.</p>	<p>3. Support meaning with realia</p>	<p>Student comprehension and language development is enhanced by the provision of real objects with which to interact, that relate to the content concepts and support the lessons’ language objectives.</p>	<p>Key to second language learners’ comprehension is the use of language in authentic contexts. Providing real objects, images, and using technology for students to interact with in order to support meaning can create the authentic context necessary to comprehend, as well as use language appropriately.</p>
<p>Domain 3: Instruction. Component 3a: Communicating with Students. Element: Explanations of content. Proficient: Teacher’s explanation of content is appropriate and connects with students’ knowledge and experience.</p>	<p>4. Activate prior knowledge and/or create shared knowledge</p>	<p>Teacher helps students identify connections to content that are culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate. Teacher acknowledges that students may possess prior knowledge in a non-English language and helps students bridge that knowledge into English.</p>	<p>Although research is clear that tapping students’ prior knowledge when introducing a concept is beneficial to all students, it is essential for students learning in their second language. In order for ELLs to comprehend both the content and the language of instruction, teachers must connect new learning to prior knowledge, and those connections must be culturally relevant in order for the students to benefit from them (Echeverria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).</p>





Table 1, cont.

Danielson Framework Element	Component of Sheltering	Instructional Adaptations for Culture and Language	Explanation
<p>Domain 1: Planning and Preparation.</p> <p>Component 1e: Designing Coherent Instruction. Element: Instructional materials and resources.</p> <p>Proficient: All of the materials and resources are suitable to students, support the instructional outcomes, and are designed to engage students in meaningful learning.</p>	<p>5. Make text accessible</p>	<p>Adaptations are made in order to make grade level text accessible to students at various language proficiency levels. Teacher plans strategies before, during, and after reading that scaffold the language demands of the text for second language learners. The selected materials and resources are culturally responsive and foster language development.</p>	<p>In order for second language learners to comprehend and utilize text, teachers must make a variety of modifications. Planning these modifications requires an understanding of text complexity, second language acquisition, and the language proficiency levels of their students.</p>
<p>Domain 1: Planning and Preparation.</p> <p>Component 1a: Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy.</p> <p>Element: Knowledge of prerequisite relationships.</p> <p>Distinguished: Teacher's plans and practices reflect understanding of prerequisite relationships among topics and concepts and a link to necessary cognitive structures by students to ensure understanding.</p>	<p>6. Develop student learning strategies</p>	<p>Teacher plans for the development of student-applied learning strategies that are appropriate to the discipline and to the cognitive and linguistic levels of the students. Opportunities for students to practice these strategies and skills and transfer them across learning contexts/disciplines are provided.</p>	<p>While it takes a minimum of 5-7 years to gain academic proficiency in a second language, second language learners must learn academic content before fully mastering English. Therefore, it is critical that teachers provide them direct and explicit instruction in learning strategies to comprehend and communicate effectively while they are acquiring English (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).</p>
<p>Domain 1: Planning and Preparation.</p> <p>Component 1b: Demonstrating Knowledge of Students.</p> <p>Element: Knowledge of students' skills, knowledge, and language proficiency.</p> <p>Proficient: Teacher recognizes the value of understanding students' skills, knowledge, and language proficiency and displays this knowledge for groups of students.</p>	<p>7. Bridge the two languages</p>	<p>Teacher demonstrates an understanding of how to bridge students' knowledge in one language to learning in another language. Teacher purposefully plans for students to further develop both conceptual understandings and multilingual proficiency by providing opportunities for students to explore connections across languages.</p>	<p>Second language learners bring with them a breadth of background knowledge and conceptual understanding in their native language. It is essential that teachers of ELLs identify and build upon their linguistic assets, helping them develop strategies to bridge what they know in one language to the other language (Beeman & Urow, 2012).</p>
<p>Domain 1: Planning and Preparation.</p> <p>Component 1b: Demonstrating Knowledge of Students.</p> <p>Element: Knowledge of students' interests and cultural heritage.</p> <p>Proficient: Teacher recognizes the value of understanding students' interests and cultural heritage and displays this knowledge for groups of students.</p>	<p>8. Affirm identity</p>	<p>Teacher plans to integrate knowledge of students' cultural heritage into the classroom environment, curriculum, and instructional practices.</p>	<p>ELLs face many challenges within the U.S. school context, including being viewed from a deficit perspective. Paramount to their academic success is a strong sense of identity built upon their linguistic and cultural assets (Nieto, 1996). Teachers play a key role in affirming students' positive identity development through the way they design their instruction and the attitudes with which they interact with their students.</p>