

## Chapter 8 Assessment

### *Chapter at a Glance*

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##### **Works Cited**

Student achievement of the California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

(CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy) and the California English Language Development Standards (CA ELD Standards) depends on educators' skilled use of assessment information. With these standards, the landscape of assessment and accountability in California has experienced a dramatic shift. Not only do the standards present new goals for California educators as depicted in the outer ring of Figure 8.1 below, but the implementation of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) system represents a major shift in the intent of statewide assessment: "It is the intent of the Legislature...to provide a system of assessments of pupils that has the primary purposes of assisting teachers, administrators, and pupils and their parents; improving teaching and learning; and promoting high-quality teaching and learning using a variety of assessment approaches and types" (E60602.5(a)). This shift is consonant with major emphases in California's standards for college and career readiness: a renewed focus on purposeful and deeper learning for students and their teachers, strong collaboration and partnerships at all levels of education, and a culture of continuous growth based on reflective practice.

Shift

Figure 8.1. Goals, Context, and Themes of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards



This chapter describes what is involved in the skilled use of assessment to support student achievement of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards—and ultimately the overarching goals of ELA/literacy and ELD instruction: students develop the readiness for college, careers, and civic life; attain the capacities of literate individuals; become broadly literate; and acquire the skills necessary for living and learning in the 21st century. (See outer ring of Figure 8.1.) Both sets of standards, as discussed throughout the framework, constitute shifts that have significant implications for assessment. First, the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and CA ELD Standards are organized in a coherent structure from kindergarten through grade twelve. The CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy within each strand (reading, writing, speaking and listening<sup>1</sup>, and language) can be backward mapped from the CCR Anchor Standards, meaning that students work on a relatively small number of broad competencies to move from novice to expert. Similarly, the CA ELD Standards (Interacting in Meaningful Ways, Learning About How English Works, Using Foundational Literacy Skills) are organized coherently to help teachers make important instruction and assessment decisions for ELs by grade level *and* English language proficiency level. Second, both sets of standards encompass the full spectrum of language and literacy competencies from kindergarten through grade twelve, meaning that students apply and transfer skills from the earliest grades. Third, the standards encourage educators to think broadly and plan instruction comprehensively. “[E]ach standard need not be a separate focus for instruction and assessment. Often, several standards can be addressed by a single, rich task [, so that] students can develop mutually reinforcing skills and exhibit mastery...across a range of texts [and tasks]” (CDE 2013, 4-5). And finally, the standards recommend that language and literacy learning be connected with the academic disciplines from the earliest grades onward. Assessment, then, should enable educators to determine a student’s trajectory in

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<sup>1</sup> As noted throughout this framework, speaking and listening should be broadly interpreted. Speaking and listening should include deaf and hard of hearing students using American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language. Students who are deaf and hard of hearing who do not use ASL as their primary language but use amplification, residual hearing, listening and spoken language, cued speech and sign supported speech, access general education curriculum with varying modes of communication.

developing proficiency in language and literacy within and across the years in the standards.

→ The chapter begins with a discussion of the **different purposes of assessment**—both *for* and *of* learning. **Cycles of assessment**—short, medium, and long—are then discussed, including the types and purposes of assessment within each time frame and the decisions that each assessment type can inform. Snapshots of teacher use of assessment are included throughout the discussion of the cycles. The role of student involvement and feedback in assessment is described, followed by guidance for assessment of ELD progress and descriptions of assessment for intervention. In addition, the chapter briefly discusses mandated statewide assessments and concludes with a consideration of the technical quality of assessments to ensure that assessments yield accurate information for their intended purposes.

This chapter can be used in several ways. As a source of professional learning for teachers and school and district leaders, the chapter can play a critical role in strengthening educators' assessment literacy, in other words their knowledge and understanding of assessment practices and appropriate use of assessment evidence to shape powerful instruction. Teachers and leaders can use this chapter to examine the types of assessment practices and sources of assessment evidence currently in use in schools and propose needed additions and adjustments. This chapter highlights the process of formative assessment, which should become the focus of in-depth professional learning and support, including dialogue with peers, time for practicing new approaches, and coaching for reflection and refinement.

**Purposes of Assessment** ← **Quickly skim this section, focus on Figure 8.2**

Assessment is designed and used for different purposes. For example, an annual assessment designed to assess how well students have met a specific standard (for example, CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy RI.4.8: *Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text*) does just that: It tells educators whether students have met a specific standard. However, it cannot serve the purpose of diagnosing a particular reading difficulty a fourth grade student is experiencing in achieving the standard. Nor can it provide substantive insights into how a student is beginning to understand what constitutes evidence in a specific text. In the use of any

assessment, a central question is, “Am I using this assessment for the purpose for which it is intended?”

Assessment has two fundamental purposes: One is to provide information about student learning minute-by-minute, day-to-day, and week-to-week so teachers can continuously adapt instruction to meet students’ specific needs and secure progress.

This type of assessment is intended to assist learning and is often referred to as formative assessment or assessment *for* learning. Formative assessment occurs in real time, during instruction while student learning is underway (Allal 2010; Black and Wiliam 1998; Bell and Cowie 2000; Heritage 2010; Shepard 2000, 2005). For example, a third grade teacher working with small groups of students on distinguishing their point of view from a particular author’s is able to gain insights into students’ developing skills through the use of strategic questions and can adjust instruction and students’ next steps immediately based on the students’ responses.

Although discussed further in the next section, formative assessment is briefly defined in Figure 8.2.

### Figure 8.2. What is Formative Assessment?

**What is formative assessment?** Formative assessment is a *process* teachers and students use *during* instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching moves and learning tactics. It is *not* a tool or an event, nor a bank of test items or performance tasks. Well-supported by research evidence, it improves students’ learning in time to achieve intended instructional outcomes. Key features include:

1. ***Clear lesson-learning goals and success criteria***, so students understand what they’re aiming for;
2. ***Evidence of learning*** gathered *during lessons* to determine where students are relative to goals;
3. ***A pedagogical response to evidence, including descriptive feedback*** that supports learning by helping students answer: *Where am I going? Where am I now? What are my next steps?*
4. ***Peer- and self-assessment*** to strengthen students’ learning, efficacy, confidence, and autonomy;
5. ***A collaborative classroom culture*** where students and teachers are partners in learning.

From Linqanti (2014, 2)

A second purpose of assessment is to provide information on students’ current levels of achievement after a period of learning has occurred. Such assessments—which may be classroom-based, districtwide, or statewide—serve a summative purpose and are sometimes referred to as assessments *of* learning. They help determine whether students have attained a certain level of competency after a more or less

extended period of instruction and learning, for example, at the end of a unit which may last several weeks, at the end of a quarter, or annually (National Research Council [NRC] 2001). Inferences made by teachers from the results of these assessments can be used to make decisions about student placement, instruction, curriculum, and interventions, and to assign grades. For example, the current state assessment of English language proficiency (ELP), the California English Language Development Text (CELDT), measures an EL's annual progress in attaining ELP. School districts use the results of the CELDT to make decisions about the ongoing instructional placement or possible reclassification of ELs. The CELDT will be replaced by the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC). (See page 60.)

As part of a balanced and comprehensive assessment system, assessment **for** learning and assessment **of** learning are both important. Another way to view this distinction is to note that assessment(s) of learning usually involve a tool or event *after* a period of learning, while assessment for learning is a process. Any evidence-gathering strategy used during formative assessment must yield information that is *timely* and *specific* enough to assist learning while it is occurring. Figure 8.3 highlights differences in key dimensions of these assessment purposes.

**Figure 8.3. Key Dimensions of Assessment *for* Learning and Assessment *of* Learning**

<b>Assessment: A Process of Reasoning from Evidence to Inform Teaching and Learning</b>			
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Assessment <i>for</i> learning</b>	<b>Assessment <i>of</i> learning</b>	
<b>Method</b>	<b>Formative Assessment Process</b>	<b>Classroom Summative/ Interim/Benchmark Assessment*</b>	<b>Large-scale Summative Assessment</b>
<b>Main Purpose</b>	Assist immediate learning (in the moment)	Measure student achievement or progress (may also inform future teaching and learning)	Evaluate educational programs and measure multi-year progress
<b>Focus</b>	Teaching and learning	Measurement	Accountability
<b>Locus</b>	Individual student and classroom learning	Grade level/ department/school	School/district/state

<b>Priority for Instruction</b>	High	Medium	Low
<b>Proximity to learning</b>	In-the-midst	Middle-distance	Distant
<b>Timing</b>	<i>During</i> immediate instruction or sequence of lessons	<i>After</i> teaching-learning cycle → <i>between</i> units/periodic	<i>End</i> of year/course
<b>Participants</b>	Teacher and Student (T-S / S-S / Self)	Student (may later include T-S in conference)	Student

Adapted from Linqunti (2014)

\*Assessment of learning may also be used for formative purposes *if* assessment evidence is used to shape future instruction. Such assessments include weekly quizzes; curriculum embedded within-unit tasks (e.g., oral presentations, writing projects, portfolios) or end-of-unit/culminating tasks; monthly writing samples, reading assessments (e.g., oral reading observation, periodic foundational skills assessments); and student reflections/self-assessments (e.g., rubric self-rating).

Great Paragraph for discussion at districts and sites

As Figure 8.3 illustrates, assessment for learning—comprising key practices of the formative assessment process—occurs during instruction (or while learning is happening) and assists students' immediate learning needs. As it is intertwined and inseparable from teachers' pedagogical practice, formative assessment is of the highest priority. It is especially important in assessing and guiding students forward in developing the broad range of language and literacy skills and their application. Note also in Figure 8.3 that some assessments of learning can be used for formative purposes—that is, they can be used to inform future teaching and learning (and not simply to report on achievement or progress). This is only the case *if* the evidence gathering tool serves *both* the focus of instruction of the previous unit (or period of learning students just engaged in) *and* immediate future learning goals.

Classroom teachers, school leaders, and professional learning providers should consider the support that educators require in order to understand and implement the formative assessment process, as well as to use interim/benchmark and summative assessments effectively. Importantly, educators need to interpret assessment evidence in order to plan instruction and respond pedagogically to emerging student learning.

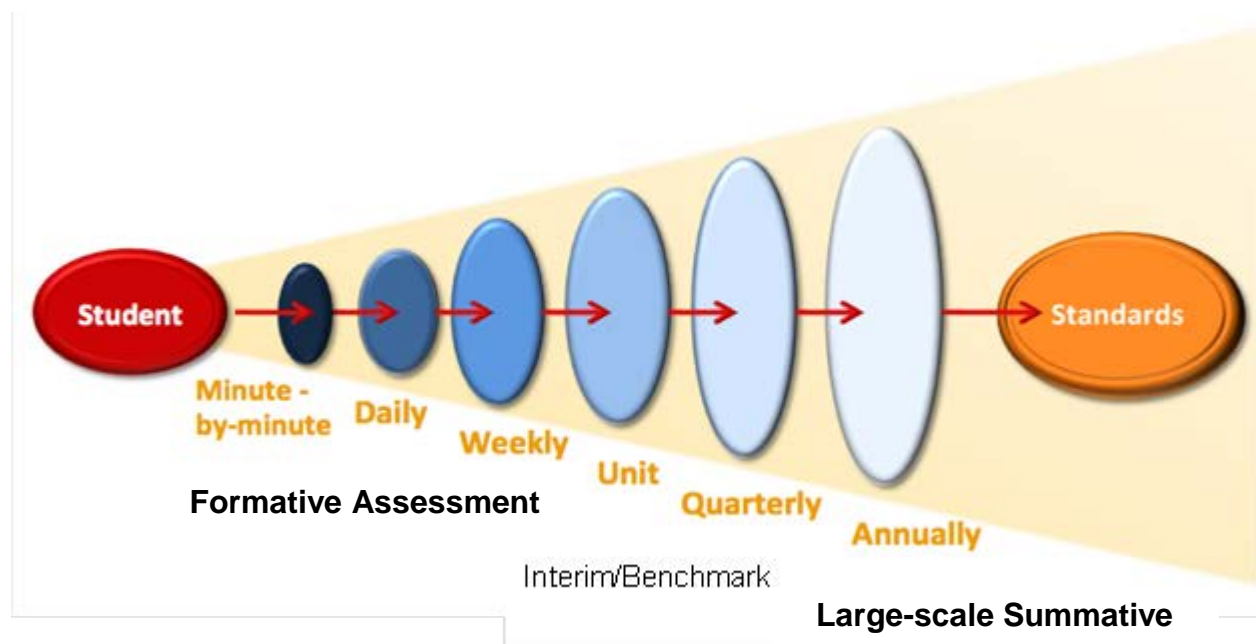


Collaborative professional environments, such as communities of practice, should be the nexus of learning and work that teachers do relative to assessment evidence as part of an ongoing cycle of inquiry (see Chapter 11). To maximize the use of assessment information for decisions related to student achievement of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards, teachers and leaders need to make full use of assessment for both formative and summative purposes.

### Assessment Cycles

One way to think about assessment for different purposes is to conceptualize assessment as operating in different cycles: short, medium, and long (Wiliam 2006). Figure 8.4 shows a range of assessments within a comprehensive assessment system. Those assessments that are more proximate to student learning (i.e., minute-by-minute, daily, weekly) operate in a short cycle because they address a short period of teaching and learning. Short-cycle assessment serves a formative purpose because its intended use is to inform immediate teaching and learning. Assessments administered at the end of the year are long-cycle because they cover a much longer period of learning. They are primarily used for summative purposes.

Figure 8.4. Assessment Cycles by Purpose



Adapted from Herman and Heritage (2007)



Occupying a middle position between short-cycle (formative) and annual (summative) assessment is interim/benchmark assessment: “assessments administered periodically throughout the school year, at specified times during a curriculum sequence to evaluate students’ knowledge and skills relative to an explicit set of longer-term learning goals” (Herman, Osmundson, and Dietel 2010, 1). In Figure 8.4, classroom summative assessments are referred to as unit assessments (although they could also occur in shorter time frames), and interim/benchmark assessments are referred to as quarterly assessments. Such periodic assessments operate in a medium cycle because they address longer-term goals than those assessments more proximate to student learning but not as long-term as annual assessments. Classroom summative or interim/benchmark assessments are generally used for summative purposes—evaluating what has been learned—although they may be used for formative purposes if they inform decisions that teachers and instructional leaders make within the school year regarding curriculum, instructional programs, professional learning, and so forth to improve future student learning. However, they are distinct from the formative assessment process because, by their design and intended use, they do not inform immediate teaching and learning. Unit assessments primarily serve a summative function but can serve a formative purpose if the teacher can act on the assessment information to support improved learning in a future unit. Progress-monitoring assessments can be short, medium, or long cycle, depending on whether they are administered after a longer or shorter period of instruction and they can serve both a formative and summative function. (For more information on screening, diagnostic assessment, and progress monitoring, see subsequent sections of this chapter).

Assessments within each cycle function best when they are part of a comprehensive, coherent and continuous system of assessment that provides ongoing information to teachers throughout the year (NRC 2001). Within such systems, minute-by-minute, daily, and weekly assessment feeds into unit assessment, which, in turn, feeds into periodic (e.g., end-of-unit, quarterly interim/benchmark) assessments, and multiple interim assessments feed into the annual assessment of the standards. A comprehensive, coherent and continuous system of assessment provides mutually complementary views of student learning, ensures that assessment within each cycle is

focused on the same ultimate goal—achievement of standards—and push instruction and learning in a common direction (Herman 2010).

Each assessment cycle provides information at varying levels of detail and inferences drawn from the assessment results are used to address specific questions about student learning and inform a range of decisions and actions. Figure 8.5 summarizes the types and purposes of the assessments within each assessment cycle.

**Figure 8.5. Types and Uses of Assessments Within Assessment Cycles**

Cycle	Methods	Information	Uses/Actions
<b>Short</b>			
<b>Minute-by-minute</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Observation</li> <li>-Questions (teachers and students)</li> <li>-Instructional tasks</li> <li>-Student discussions</li> <li>-Written work/representations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students' current learning status, relative difficulties and misunderstandings, emerging or partially formed ideas, full understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Keep going, stop and find out more, provide oral feedback to individuals, adjust instructional moves in relation to student learning status (e.g., act on "teachable moments")</li> </ul>
<b>Daily Lesson</b>	Planned and placed strategically in the lesson: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Observation</li> <li>-Questions (teachers and students)</li> <li>-Instructional tasks</li> <li>-Student discussions</li> <li>-Written work/representations</li> <li>-Student self-reflection (e.g., quick write)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students' current learning status, relative difficulties and misunderstandings, emerging or partially formed ideas, full understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Continue with planned instruction</li> <li>-Instructional adjustments in this or the next lesson</li> <li>-Find out more</li> <li>-Feedback to class or individual students (oral or written)</li> </ul>
<b>Week</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Student discussions and work products</li> <li>-Student self-reflection (e.g., journaling)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students' current learning status relative to lesson learning goals (e.g., have students met the goal(s), are they nearly there?)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Instructional planning for start of new week</li> <li>-Feedback to students (oral or written)</li> </ul>

Cycle	Methods	Information	Uses/Actions
<b>Medium</b>			
<b>End-of-Unit/ Project</b>	-Student work artifacts (e.g., portfolio, writing project, oral presentation) -Use of rubrics -Student self-reflection (e.g., short survey) -Other classroom summative assessments designed by teacher(s)	-Status of student learning relative to unit learning goals-	-Grading -Reporting -Teacher reflection on effectiveness of planning and instruction -Teacher grade level/departmental discussions of student work
<b>Quarterly/ Interim/ Benchmark</b>	-Portfolio -Oral reading observation -Test	-Status of achievement of intermediate goals toward meeting standards (results aggregated and disaggregated)	-Making within-year instructional decisions. -Monitoring, reporting; grading; same-year adjustments to curriculum programs -Teacher reflection on effectiveness of planning and instruction -Readjusting professional learning priorities and resource decisions
<b>Long</b>			
<b>Annual</b>	-Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment -CELDT -Portfolio -District/school created test	Status of student achievement with respect to standards (results aggregated and disaggregated)	-Judging students' overall learning -Gauging student, school, district, and state year-to-year progress -Monitoring, reporting and accountability - Classification and placement (e.g., ELs) -Certification -Adjustments to following year's instruction, curriculum, programs; -Final grades -Professional learning prioritization and resource

Cycle	Methods	Information	Uses/Actions
			decisions -Teacher reflection (individual/grade level/department) on overall effectiveness of planning and instruction

### Short-Cycle Formative Assessment

Short-cycle formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students *during instruction* that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve student achievement of intended instructional outcomes (McManus 2008). Short-cycle formative assessment occurs when evidence of learning is gathered minute-by-minute, daily, and weekly from a variety of sources during ongoing instruction for the purpose of moving learning forward to meet short-term goals (i.e., lesson goals) (Black and Wiliam 1998; Council of Chief State School Officers Formative Assessment State Collaborative 2006; Heritage 2010; Popham 2010). In the remainder of this chapter, this short-cycle formative assessment process is referred to as formative assessment.

This type of assessment provides the most detailed information for teachers and their students. The idea of formative assessment, or assessment *for* learning, does not apply to a specific tool or assessment. This is not to say that a tool or assessment cannot be used for formative assessment purposes—it can, but only if it provides actionable information about students' learning status relative to the desired lesson goal and teachers can use it immediately to adjust their instruction. Many assessments marketed under the formative assessment label do not provide information needed about students' learning in order to adjust instruction and guide students' learning while it is occurring (Perie, Marion, and Gong 2009; Shepard 2005).

The sources of evidence available to teachers in short-cycle formative assessment are what students do, say, make, or write (Griffin 2007). For example, sources of evidence can be teacher-student interactions fuelled by well-designed questions (Bailey and Heritage 2008; Black, and others 2003), structured peer-to-peer discussions that the teacher observes (Harlen 2007), dialogues that embed assessment into an activity already occurring in the classroom (Ruiz-Primo and Furtak 2004, 2006

2007), student work from well-designed tasks (Poppers 2011), and web-based reading assessments that provide immediate feedback (Cohen, and others 2011).

The report of the Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers/State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (FAST/SCASS) Project of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) emphasizes several features of formative assessment. First, “formative assessment is a *process* rather than a particular kind of assessment.... There is no such thing as a ‘formative test’” (McManus 2008, 3). Second, “the formative assessment process involves both teachers *and* students...., both of whom must be actively involved in the process of improving learning” (3). Third, teachers must be clear about the ultimate goal of a unit and the sub-goals or stepping stones that are important along the way: “...from a learning progression teachers have the big picture of what students need to learn, as well as sufficient detail for planning instruction to meet short-term goals” (4). Fourth, success criteria and evidence of learning need to be laid out at the beginning of the project and reviewed along the way: “...teachers must provide the criteria by which learning will be assessed... using language readily understood by students, with realistic examples of what meets and does not meet the criteria.”

Whatever the source of the evidence, the teachers’ role is to construct or devise **ways to elicit responses** from students that reveal where they are in their learning and to use the evidence to move learning forward (Sadler 1989). For effective formative assessment, **teachers need to be clear about the short-term learning goals** (for example, for a lesson) that cumulatively lead to students’ attainment of one or more standards. They will also need to be clear about the success criteria for the lesson goal—how will the students show if they have met, or are on the way to meeting the lesson goal. **The evidence-gathering strategy can then be aligned to the success criteria.**

Questions that formative assessment can answer include the following:

- Where are my students in relation to learning goals for this lesson?
- What is the gap<sup>2</sup> between students' current learning and the goal?
- What individual difficulties are my students having?
- Are there any missing building blocks in their learning?
- What do I need to adjust in my teaching to ensure students learn?

Information from formative assessment is used to make instructional adjustments in real time, to continue with the planned lesson, or to provide feedback to students that will help them take steps to advance their learning. (Feedback to students is discussed in the Student Involvement section of this chapter.)

An important point about teachers' use of evidence in formative assessment is that their inferences from the evidence and their actions in response to that evidence focus on individual students. This does not mean that instruction for students is necessarily on a one-to-one basis, but rather that individual needs are addressed in the context of a class of students. This orientation to individuals is necessary if students are going to have the opportunity to learn and progress equally (Heritage 2013). To do so, instruction needs to be contingent upon each student's current learning status. In other words, instruction has to be matched to where the students are so that they can be assisted to progress and meet desired goals.

While formative assessment evidence is not aggregated in the same way as medium- and long-cycle assessment information, teachers can categorize individual student responses to look for patterns across the class or for particular students who are outliers. For example, at the end of a lesson after students have completed a response to a question about a text, a teacher can quickly categorize them into students who are showing they understand, students who are nearly there, and students who need more work. The next day's instruction can be planned accordingly.

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<sup>2</sup> The gap refers to the distance between where the students' learning currently stands at particular points in the lesson (a lesson can be several periods or days long) and the intended learning goal for the lesson. The purpose of short-cycle formative assessment is to close this gap so that all students meet the goal (Sadler 1989). This should not be confused with the term *achievement gap*, which refers to differences in summative educational outcomes among different subgroups of students.

Teachers of ELs should take great care in making these formative assessment decisions. Depending on their level of English language proficiency, some ELs may not be able to fully express their ideas orally about a topic during a class discussion; however, this does not necessarily mean that they do not understand the topic. In addition, an informal observation that indicates that ELs are not orally proficient in English should not determine how the students should be taught reading in English. English learners do not have to be proficient in oral English before they can learn to read in English (Bunch, Kibler, and Pimental 2012). Teachers should use a combination of observations (e.g., during collaborative conversations between students about texts read) and informal inventories of reading (e.g., listening to students read aloud during small reading group time, asking specific comprehension questions to elicit student understandings) in order to determine how best to support their ELs and provide *just-in-time* scaffolding as they progress in their reading development. In addition, the CA ELD Standards clearly specify that all ELs, regardless of their level of English language proficiency, are capable of engaging in intellectually-rich tasks at the same cognitive level as their English-proficient peers. To help ensure this happens, teachers can use in-the-moment formative assessment practices to provide the appropriate level of scaffolding for ELs. (For more information on scaffolding, see Chapter 2.)

Using the formative assessment process in an EL student's primary language, in contexts where teaching and learning utilize this resource, such as in an alternative program, may also offer instructionally actionable information. For example, a newcomer EL at the Emerging level of English language proficiency (e.g., a student who has been in the U.S. for less than a year) may find it difficult to respond (in writing or orally) to a question about their knowledge of a science or history topic in English with the same level of detail as they might be able to do in their primary language. Teachers could ask their newcomer EL students to quickly write responses to text-based questions first in their primary language (if they are literate in it) before they respond in written English. Then, the two pieces of writing could be compared in order to identify similarities and differences between both content knowledge and literacy in the primary language and English. This technique could be applied strategically so that teachers ensure they have a clear understanding of what students know about particular topics