



FRENCH **as a** SECOND LANGUAGE

NINE-YEAR COURSE
SEQUENCE

CLASSROOM
ASSESSMENT MATERIAL
(Interim Edition)

GRADE **4**

French as a Second Language

**Classroom Assessment Material —
Nine-year Course Sequence
Grade 4**

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Introduction

Purpose of the Classroom Assessment Materials

This document provides teachers with examples of assessment materials for specific outcomes defined in the *Nine-year French as a Second Language Program of Studies* for Grade 4. The assessment materials are designed for assessment **for** learning and assessment **as** learning as it relates to the acquisition of French. Learner outcomes from the French as a Second Language Program of Studies provided the basis for the development of these performance tasks and their accompanying assessment tools. These tools are intended to be linked closely to classroom practice.

Although the main purpose of the performance tasks described in this document is the assessment *for* and *as* learning, teachers may decide, if they so wish, to turn these performance tasks into assessments *of* learning. Specific evaluation criteria will need to be created and shared with students should this decision be made.

About the Classroom Assessment Materials

The assessment materials included in this document consist of performance tasks, accompanied by a variety of assessment tools for teachers and students in order to gather evidence and information about student progress and achievement. **The assessment tasks have been organized by field of experience and by subfield for easy access and planning purposes.**

The assessment materials address specific outcomes from the four components of the French as a Second Language Program of Studies: Experience–Communication, Language, Culture and Language Learning Strategies.

The document is divided into three parts: the teacher materials, student materials and appendix materials. The teacher portion contains information that relates to the outcomes being assessed, the materials required to carry out the task, the approximate time frame for when the task may be carried out, and types of teacher and student tools that can be used to assess the task. These two sets of materials are used together. Alternative assessment tasks also provide suggestions for the assessment of different skills or different contexts for the same outcomes. These tasks are found at the bottom of each performance task. The student materials contain the Instruction Page for the student, any ancillary pages, when necessary, and the assessment tools that are to be used by the students for self-assessment or peer-assessment activities.

The appendix provides general assessment tools that can be used throughout the school year when performance tasks are not required.

How and When to Use the Classroom Assessment Materials

A variety of assessment tools have been developed to provide teachers with different ways in which to gather evidence of learning. These assessment tools are intended to reflect the philosophy of the program of studies and in keeping with current assessment practices. You, as the teacher, will decide which tasks to use at various points of the teaching–learning process. Your decision will be based on which specific outcomes from the program of studies you are currently developing with your students.

The assessment tools are aimed specifically at assessing students’ learning of French in an assessment for learning or assessment as learning context. They are intended to give students positive feedback in order to support them in their learning of French and to provide them with corrective feedback as they acquire skills in the language.

A time frame has been given as to when each performance task may be administered, but these times are approximate and will depend on the amount of time allocated to the course per week and on the abilities of the students. These time frames are also based on the instructional starting point of the field of experience or the subfield.

Not all the performance tasks need to be administered. Rather, the variety of assessment activities provides possibilities for assessing the different fields of experience and their corresponding subfields, while providing flexibility as to their use. It is important, however, to consider that assessment practices must be in line with teaching practices. Students are to be assessed only on **what** has been taught, sufficiently practised and acquired, in a variety of settings, in order to ascertain that learning is occurring or, as in the case of assessment *of* learning, has occurred.

It is important to read through each performance task and decide if it is appropriate for where you are in the instructional cycle. For example, the first performance task relates to Classroom Interactions and its purpose is to determine if students can work with a partner to follow the pattern of this type of interaction. As this performance task is based on structured practice, you may decide to administer this task after the first week of instruction to gather information on students while they work in a pair setting as well as to get them accustomed to the idea of using assessment for learning tools in French class. However, you may decide to use the performance task to determine if students can demonstrate the concepts being assessed independently. In this case, you will need to make adjustments to the instructions and to the assessment tools.

Thus, depending on the purpose and use of the performance task, the teacher tools can be changed or adapted, as you see fit, to suit the assessment for learning situation. For that matter, any of the assessment tools can be adapted, changed or not used depending on your students’ needs and abilities and in keeping with your particular style of teaching.

It is important to note that it is not always necessary to assess the same outcomes all the time. As a result, the tools in this document assess different outcomes at various points in the development of the student’s French language performance throughout the school

year. For example, the outcome *taking the risk to say or write something in French* is assessed more often at the beginning of the year in the performance tasks than in the latter part of the year, as other outcomes become more predominant in the student's language development.

It is expected, then, that the information collected will be used to provide students with ongoing feedback about and reflection on their learning so they, in turn, can set personal learning goals and continue to progress. Assessment information gathered by teachers should be used to determine areas for further instruction and intervention.

Assessment of Student Learning

Current trends in assessment focus on judging student progress in three ways:¹ *assessment for learning*, *assessment as learning* and *assessment of learning*. Each assessment approach serves a specific purpose. Traditional evaluation approaches of student achievement have focused primarily on accumulated results and judging and reporting students' performances based on these results. However, current research demonstrates that *assessment for* and *assessment as learning* are showing to be powerful motivators for students and, for teachers, are invaluable in terms of obtaining diagnostic information that can be used for differentiated instruction. *Assessment for* and *as learning* approaches are not new; rather, teachers have used these approaches in conjunction with traditional forms of evaluation in the past. The difference, however, lies in the fact that these approaches were used for more informal diagnostic purposes and not as explicitly as current assessment practices suggest.

Assessment for learning makes it possible to verify students' continual progress in terms of the program of studies' outcomes, in general, and lesson outcomes, more specifically. Assessment for learning enables students to become consciously aware of what they do well or not so well on a regular basis, by examining their strengths and then determining what areas require improvement in terms of knowledge, skill development and the use of French in certain learning situations. Assessment for learning also encourages students to take risks as they feel safe trying out new things in an environment that promotes learning through assessment. From the teacher's perspective, this investigative or fact-gathering purpose not only provides information about students' knowledge and skills, but also can relate information regarding students' attitudes toward learning, in general, and identify any preconceptions, misconceptions or gaps in learning that they may have.

Assessment for learning can be done by the teacher or students and even in some cases, parents. This form of assessment encourages students to take an active role in the process. Furthermore, they gain a better understanding of the nature and development of their learning while at the same time becoming accountable for their own learning and their language abilities. Assessment for learning procedures provide descriptive feedback

¹ *Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind – Assessment for Learning; Assessment as Learning; Assessment of Learning*, Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education, 2006.

to students that can take the form of formal or informal oral or written comments, checklists or anecdotal notes. Rubrics also can be used to assess specific outcomes using analytic criteria or in a holistic fashion.

Assessment as learning focuses on the metacognitive aspect of students' learning. Metacognition is based on the notion that learning is a conscious process of constructing knowledge from what has been acquired previously and reintegrating or restructuring it when new ideas or concepts are learned. In this approach, students are viewed as the bridge between what is known and the unknown that is being learned. Their role is to assess critically what is being learned and to monitor their thinking and learning processes so as to make adjustments, adaptations and even changes, when necessary, as to how they are learning and acquiring new information.

Assessment as learning mainly uses reflection tools to identify what students know about who they are as learners and how they are learning or have learned something. The purpose of reflection is to get to the heart of deeper understandings of what students know about themselves so that they are better equipped to look at themselves critically and become more effective decision makers in terms of their own learning. To achieve this, students need to be trained in the reflective process and shown the importance of becoming aware of their strengths and weakness so as to improve learning. Structured, modelled practice over time will provide students with the opportunity to develop the independence they need to monitor their own learning.

Assessment of learning focuses on the cumulative results of learning. For the most part, it involves providing information on student knowledge or performance, in a quantified fashion, as it directly relates to specific evaluated outcomes. Assessment of learning takes place at specific times in the instructional sequence, such as at the end of a series of lessons, at the end of the unit or at the end of the school year, in order to determine the degree of success students have had in attaining the program of studies' outcomes. In many ways, the tools used confirm what is already known about student achievement, especially when a strong assessment for a learning plan is in place.

Assessment of learning can take the form of performance tasks, educational projects, quizzes or final examinations. Students' progress is reported, usually by way of a mark (e.g., percentage, letter grade) that is shared in a public manner with the student, the parents and/or the school administration. These judgements are often used to make decisions about progress and promotion.

Principles of Effective Classroom Assessment in FSL

Language development is a lengthy process, requiring much patience and nurturing. It warrants continual monitoring and feedback to inform students of their progress in learning French. Student assessment is an integral part of the teaching–learning cycle and consists of a systematic process that provides students, teachers, parents and administrators with information about student learning. This assessment process involves

the gathering of evidence, in a variety of ways, of what students know about French and to what degree they are able to apply their knowledge and skills at any given moment. A strong student assessment process involves teachers and students in evaluating, analyzing and interpreting the results at various points in the instructional cycle. This process, then, allows decisions to be made as to the nature and direction of future learning activities and describes students' overall language learning.

ASSESSMENT IS ONGOING

The assessment of students' learning can come before, during or after instruction. It is a continuous process in which teachers gather information about student learning and must be considered in the instructional planning process, and not only during the instructional period. Assessment cannot be haphazard if it is to be effective and motivating for students. Ongoing student assessment facilitates decisions as to how to best support student learning while students work toward achieving the outcomes of the program of studies.

ASSESSMENT IS PURPOSEFUL

A strong assessment plan seeks to gather, interpret, record and communicate information about student learning to teachers, students and parents. The data gathered and analyzed are used to make important and effective decisions about the teaching–learning cycle. The assessment tools used need to be in keeping with what students are learning, where they are in their learning and what information needs to be gathered. Teachers need to decide carefully when and how to assess students and what it is they want to find out. The information obtained then needs to be used to improve and enhance student learning. Therefore, assessment is grounded in contexts that are meaningful to students while addressing specific outcomes in the program of studies.

ASSESSMENT IS BALANCED AND EMPLOYS A RANGE OF METHODS

A variety of assessment methods ensures that different aspects of student learning are assessed. Assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning tasks provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a risk-free environment while allowing for differences in abilities. Assessment *of* learning performance tasks judge the quality of student work. Using different assessment instruments will provide teachers and students with a better picture of what students know and can do. Assessing in various ways also ensures a sensitivity to different learning styles and provides students with other opportunities to demonstrate their achievement.

ASSESSMENT METHODS AND CRITERIA ARE CLEARLY COMMUNICATED

The choice of assessment method needs to be identified and explained to students so that they know the reason behind the assessment activity. In this vein, assessment criteria, written in age-appropriate language, are communicated to students before they begin any assessment activity. These assessment criteria describe what students are expected to demonstrate to meet the intended learner outcomes. Sharing criteria and making sure students are clear about what is expected empowers them to monitor their own learning and share their progress with others. However, it is important to note that the choice of

assessment activities must correspond with the learning activities that students have already carried out or be very similar to what they have already done in previous guided and independent practice activities in order to obtain reliable and valid results.

ASSESSMENT INVOLVES STUDENTS IN THE PROCESS

In order for assessment to be meaningful, it needs to involve students in the process so that students are able to identify their learning needs and goals. Students need to be trained to understand what kind of information they are being given through the different assessment tasks they are carrying out. As such, they need to understand the purpose behind self-assessment and peer assessment in order to enhance their learning of French and become more effective users of assessment information in French class. They also need to develop positive attitudes toward the use of these kinds of assessments so that they become fully engaged in the assessment process, thus becoming active learners.

ASSESSMENT REQUIRES GOOD RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING TOOLS

A strong assessment plan incorporates the use of a variety of means of recording assessment information and reporting it. In the context of assessment of learning and assessment as learning, teachers need to maintain records of students' progress in the form of descriptive feedback, anecdotal notes, student profiles and portfolio work. This information becomes very important when communicating results to students and parents. Frequent and constant feedback to students assures them that they are on the right path and allows them to make corrections and adjustments in the way they acquire and demonstrate learning.

Assessment Considerations

Should you decide that not all of the performance tasks in this document meet your specific needs or you would like to modify or create other instruments, you will need to consider the following questions.

- 1) “Why should I assess my students now?”
Determine the importance of assessing students' learning. Not everything needs to be assessed all the time. However, it is essential, especially before and during the teaching–learning cycle, to be informed of where students are in their learning, what prior knowledge they have and what preconceptions or gaps they may have with the material you are going to teach or are teaching.
- 2) “What evidence do I want to gather?”
Determine what it is you want to assess. By deciding what specific outcomes from the program of studies you are going to teach and ultimately assess, you can begin to frame the teaching and learning activities needed to expose this learning.
- 3) “How will I gather the evidence for the outcomes I am assessing that best exposes what students are learning and are able to do?”
Determine how you want to gather this evidence. You will need to consider where the students are in the teaching–learning cycle to choose the instrument or

instruments that will provide you with the most reliability and validity in the data-gathering process. You also need to consider using a variety of performance tasks so that different learning styles are addressed. In addition, you will need to use a number of instruments so that students can demonstrate their knowledge and abilities in various ways.

4) “Which instruments will I use?”

In assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning, the most common instruments are observation grids, checklists, rubrics, anecdotal notes, reflection journals or learning logs, self-assessments and peer assessments; in other words, instruments that provide descriptive feedback. Each one of these instruments provides different information and plays a specific role depending upon the performance task. Other instruments can be general in nature (see Appendix for examples). What is key, especially in the case of assessment *as* learning, is that instruments provide students with the opportunity to consider their learning and to judge their own work in relation to models, to examples of other students’ work (exemplars) and to criteria, all of which provide information to students about successful learning. Assessment should be about growth and progress, not about failure.

5) “How will I know that the instruments I am using or creating are reliable?”

The choice of instruments and what is defined in these instruments as evidence of learning will determine the reliability of the instrument. The most important aspect for the choice of instrument and its creation is to ensure that what you want to expose as evidence is clearly defined and is accurate and consistent with the outcomes of the program of studies. Again, the key is to obtain a clear picture of what students know and are able to do. No one assessment can provide the full picture. Reliability comes from cross-referencing results. Therefore, it is important to assess the same outcomes in a variety of ways so as to meet the varying learning styles of students in the class. A balance, however, must be found so as to not assess the same outcomes all the time.

6) “How will I know that the instruments I am using or creating are valid?”

Validity is determined by how well the instrument sheds light on the desired evidence of learning and how well the instrument demonstrates growth toward the attainment of the program of studies’ outcomes. The use of rating scale descriptors, for example, allows teachers to qualify the work in terms of the outcomes to be attained. By providing students with examples of work that exemplify the different descriptors, they are better able to make adjustments in their own learning and work habits and to attain improved results. Validity of the assessment comes when the assessment tools can clearly demonstrate student progress and achievement.

- 7) “How will I use the information I have gathered from the assessments I have administered?”

The strength of assessment is that it gives you a personal picture of each and every student in front of you. The use of various assessment methods allows you to share with your students, on an individual basis or as a class, what is working well and what needs to be improved. Assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning work in tandem, permitting both the student and the teacher to make important adjustments in the teaching–learning cycle so both parties can feel that successful learning is taking place. Frequently reporting results to students will assure students in their learning and assist them in better understanding themselves as learners. Individual conferences, written summaries and anecdotal reports provide students with descriptive feedback that they can use to modify, adapt or adjust learning.

As you use the performance tasks and their accompanying assessment tools contained herein or if you decide to create your own, consider these questions in your choices. Successful learning comes, in part, from the successful assessment of what students know and are able to do. **Students need to feel good about who they are and about their learning in order to continue growing in their knowledge and progressing in their skill development.**