The TEAL Project: Building EAL assessment for learning communities

Tools to Enhance Assessment Literacy of Teachers of English as an Additional Language

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Outline

• Background/ Rationale
• The Previous Project
  • Lesson Learned – The Characteristics of Effective Classroom Assessment
• The Current Project
  • The EAL Teacher Assessment for Learning Competency Framework
    • Development and Application
Background:

- The role of assessment in improving student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1989; Hatieie, 2008)
- Rising international concerns about the perceived inadequacy of teachers’ assessment literacy (Stiggins, 2002)
- Assessment for Learning (AFL) is being strongly promulgated by a large number of education systems internationally as well as nationally, eg.,
  - Curriculum Corporation/ Education Services Australia, http://www.assessmentforlearning.edu.au;
Assessment for learning (AfL) is any assessment (including summative assessment) for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting pupils’ learning. … An assessment activity can help learning if it provides information to be used as feedback, by teachers, and by their pupils in assessing themselves and each other, to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged (adapted from Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & Wiliam, 2003, p. 2-3)
Key principles of ‘assessment’ in AfL:

a. assessment is embedded in teaching and learning;
b. learning goals are explicitly shared with students and students are taught how to know and to recognize the standards they are aiming for;
c. students are engaged in continuous peer and self-assessment;
d. constructive qualitative feedback helps students to recognize the next steps needed for learning and how to take them;
e. teachers, parents and students regularly review and reflect on assessment data;
f. it is assumed every student can improve;

(adapted from the Assessment Reform Group, 1999, p.7)
“Assessment for learning:

- emphasises the interactions between learning and manageable assessment strategies that promote learning
- clearly expresses for the student and teacher the goals of the learning activity
- reflects a view of learning in which assessment helps students learn better, not just achieve a better mark
- provides ways for students to use feedback from assessment
- helps students take responsibility for their own learning
- is inclusive of all learners”
What can we learn from this?

Image from http://martin-thoma.com/what-is-the-best-programming-language/testing_cartoon/
| Assessment for learning: A typology of possibilities (Davison, 2007) |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| **In-class contingent formative assessment-while-teaching** | **More planned integrated formative assessment** | **More formal mock or trial assessments modeled on summative assessments but used for formative purposes** | **Prescribed summative assessments, but results also used formatively to guide future teaching/learning** |
| An integral but very informal part of every teacher’s daily practice | An integral part of the learning and teaching cycle, i.e. part of effective teaching and planning for the future | A time for taking stock, assessing how individuals are performing compared with whole group. | A distinctive stage at the end of a unit of learning and teaching. |
| Often spontaneous and contingent when the need arises | Criterion-referenced, but in relation to learner’s starting point | Usually pre-designed, sensitive to needs of students but also to the demands of external requirements | Pre-determined, relatively formal and set at beginning of unit of learning and teaching |
| Learner-referenced | Focus on the learning process and student progress | Focus on student progress and gap between what should be and is. | Focus mainly on the product of learning, and what student needs to do next |
| **Learner-referenced** | **Focus on the learning process and student progress** | **Focus on student progress and gap between what should be and is.** | **Focus mainly on the product of learning, and what student needs to do next** |
| Indirect or implied feedback, co-constructed by students and teacher | Direct qualitative feedback, may involve multiple and varied sources e.g. self, peers, teacher etc. | Direct qualitative feedback, may indicate profiles or grades, but still extensive student involvement | Report in profiles, levels, and marks by teacher, but preceded and/or followed by formative self and peer evaluation and extensive teacher feedback |
The Previous Project

• First, in 2011
  – an examination of current best practice (including relevant aspects of existing ESL/EAL assessment practices) in Victoria and NSW
  – 50+ experienced EAL specialist teachers from all three systems and levels of schooling examined the suitability of a selected range of assessment tools for their teaching context
Teachers’ responses confirmed the need for more effective assessment instruments

“I was really upset because it’s completely inappropriate, it gives me information that I am already able to gather in my own classroom, ... the texts are culturally exclusive ... the experience is quite traumatic for my students, you know, because its overwhelming for them because I am using language ...I’m asking them to do tasks that are way beyond them and so in most instances, I’ve just stopped because the child just sits there, and there is a sense of feeling of failure ... and that’s not what an assessment should do, you know, it should be gathering information in a non-threatening supportive way.”
“For the ESL child, I think, as far as helping us to place them on the indicators - I don’t think there’s really anything that [is] done that - to assess their language proficiency, so to speak … To have a reliable assessment tool, that we will actually assess the child and provide you with that information, I think, that is something that we definitely need, and is lacking. And for me, as an ESL teacher... I’m really longing for something like that to be around because it’s otherwise a bit of a guessing game ... and, I think, you know, we’re not, we’re not really supported by data, as yet.”  (110505_1315 22.02-23.28)
7 characteristics of effective assessment tools:

1. Need for meaningful ESL student participation in assessment tasks

“I have a new arrivals child who has been in Australia for less than a year, and he’s in grade 3/4, and for me there is a huge gap there… because he can’t participate in any formal testing he really doesn’t understand the language, and if he does, if he did cope very well, it’s not really giving us an indication of how much he’s understanding.”

(01.04.24-01.04.47)
2. Need for probing, diagnostic assessment

“I find when I’m doing a multiple choice type of test with my kids that, many of them, just guess and I watch them ... because they can’t understand really what’s asked of them. ... and that gives a really false - yes, they may be right, but you’re never really sure of how much they know and how much it’s all simple guesswork” (110506_09016.40-7.25)

“Sometimes I’ll do something, I think, “oh, its’ just going to be too hard, but I just want to see” and I’m really surprised, you know, that there are some who get to that, and I think it’s good for us to realise and for other, you know, teachers to realise, that they can be stretched, you know, they’re not just at that point”
3. Need for fine-grained ESL assessment information

“I teach grade 1/2, and I did some of the 1/2’s and some of my children got 100%, so that the test wasn’t any good for them, but some of them couldn’t get any right and they’re all on the same grade, so if I were just to give them that test and they were sent away, it’s not going to give me any information. I already know who might ... which children will do well and which wouldn’t. I need more information than that. (110505_1130 36.49-37.16)
4. Need to communicate ESL student progress across schooling

“(It) would be valuable to have some consistent approaches so we have a sort of common language, or common tasks when we’re assessing, particularly in terms of transitions when students leave our language school and they go to a mainstream school, or to an independent school, um, we have, yeah, a clear sense of where they’ve come from and the language that’s been used by the teacher in assessing them, reporting their progress.” (01.01.19-01.01.40)
5. Need for more trustworthy interpretations of standards

“From my observation, you can give five teachers of this school a piece of writing and get them to place it on the VELLS continuum and [get] five different responses – it’s so subjective, so any test that would help us, ... across the board, that would be useful.”

(110506_0333 28.29-29.02)"
6. Need for an ESL assessment package, not a single ESL test

ie. ‘no single measure’ able to address the diversity of students, proficiencies, needs and contexts

“What I think would be really good is to have some kind of a package - um - is the way that New Zealand has those fantastic resources to actually support teachers in teaching to the students’ gaps. It’s really quite explicit and it’s absolutely fantastic. So I suppose it would be really good in this whole eval - I suppose I was thinking more an evaluation package rather than a specific tool. It would be really good to have some type of (coherent) resource.” (110505_1130 37.38-38.07)
7. Need for assessment tools that teachers can tailor for their own context

“The ideal of being able to create your own tests was something that appealed to us. And .... different types of reports that could be generated to inform the teacher about what the child knows ... to be able to identify what the student can do, what the student needs to do ... and then the next step, you know, there are ideas for grouping, there are ideas for the actual teaching of those particular areas” (110505_1130 14.18-15.11)

“The best kind of testing is what you generate yourself and that relates to what you’re doing in the classroom” (210505_360 11.28-11.29)
Findings

- In the absence of systematic **standardised** approaches to ESL assessment, ESL teachers’ development and/or use of classroom- or school-based ESL assessments are limited, localised and ad hoc, and often not valued or recognised as “assessment”.

- Teachers’ knowledge about assessment is mainly informal, and professional learning tends to be confined to informal trial-and-error implementation of classroom assessment strategies.

- Thus, need more assessment literacy but also more effective standardised assessment instruments and stronger (online) assessment for EAL learning communities.
Findings

To what extent do these findings resonate with your own experience/observation?
The current 3 year project, funded by DEECD, CEO and ISV:

- Development and validation of an assessment ‘toolkit’ for use by all teachers to provide more valid and reliable assessments of the stage of development for a student in speaking and listening, reading and writing.

- Assessment and identification of entry and exit points for new arrival students in English Language Schools/Centres.

- Assessment of students on enrolment in mainstream schools.

Project Outcomes (1)

• **An online ESL Assessment Resource Centre** - containing background material re assessment principles and processes, plus with video and text-based resources.

• **An assessment tools bank** – containing a range of assessment tools and tasks organised around listening & speaking, reading and writing cross-referenced by assessment type (observation, test, analysis etc), VELS ESL stages and Year levels.
Project Outcomes (2)

• A calibrated item bank of reading and vocabulary items linked to texts to be used in a computer adaptive testing (CAT) system aligned with ESL continuum to provide information on students’ English and L1 language and literacy development at the four NAPLAN assessment points Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

• being undertaken with Educational Assessment Australia, UNSW Global.
Project Outcomes (3)

• A prototype teacher-based assessment system
  • for the collection and analysis of oral and written language samples and exemplars aligned with the ESL Continuum to provide information on students’ English language and literacy development.
  • includes strategies for evaluating students’ L1 language and literacy development.
• **Assessment for teaching and learning exemplars** – containing a selection of annotated units of work across a range of subject areas and year levels showing assessment tasks with formative feedback embedded within a teaching/learning cycle.

• **An online teacher discussion forum** - password-protected area for teachers to share problems, strategies and work samples

ESL Teacher Participation

• Within each stage, the project will draw on the specific professional knowledge of ESL teachers in:
  • collecting, evaluating and developing exemplar school-based assessment materials, tasks and strategies,
  • writing and critical review of assessment tasks items, and in
  • providing feedback on existing and recommended assessment practice.
The EAL Teacher Assessment for Learning Competency Framework

Helping ESL Teachers Improve their AfL Literacy
Research Questions

1. How do ESL teachers elicit and use assessment information to enhance learning?

2. How can we discriminate between ESL teachers’ AfL competence, supported by empirical evidence, so as to help them identify and evaluate their current competence/scaffold, guide and stretch their AfL literacy?

3. What are the implications of the results for developing and designing an ESL teachers’ AfL literacy program?
Rationale for Developing a Standards-based Framework

• The positive roles of AfL in learning and teaching (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Hattie, 2008)

• However, little or no information at system level about ESL teachers’ emerging AfL competencies

• No detailed standards to evaluate ESL teachers’ AfL development over time, nor to discriminate between different needs/stages of profession learning within a very diverse teacher cohort

• The development and evaluation of assessment literacy should be consistent with AfL principles (Davison, 2012)
Significance of the Study

• Contribution to existing knowledge
  • Input to the theorization of both AfL and teacher assessment literacy
  • Clarification of teachers’ roles in implementing AfL
  • Insights into the reasons for a lack of commonality in AfL practices
• Guide for ESL teacher’s self-assessment
• Provide a common set of practices for ESL teachers
• Reliable instrument for periodic assessment of teacher assessment literacy
• Empirical basis for needs-based AfL literacy PD
Definition of Teachers Assessment Literacy

*Teachers’ knowledge and skills in making highly contextualized, consistent, fair and trustworthy assessment decisions to effectively support student learning* (Alonzo & Davison).
Methods

- Establishing the research questions
- Significance of the study

- Literature search
- Workshop with teachers and principals
- Experts’ validation

Rationale for choosing the construct
Defining the construct

- Indicators
- Performance criteria

Pilot testing
- Item analysis
- Exploratory factor analysis
- Confirmatory factor analysis

AfL competency performance instrument

Parametisation (Item response theory application)

- Item characteristics
- Hierarchy of AfL indicators

Teacher AfL Competency Framework

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The Development Process

• Uses the principles of AfL, including self and peer assessment
• Draws on both theoretical and empirical approaches
• Uses rubrics to frame the standards
• Engages teachers/department heads/deputy principals and principals
• Involves international experts in AfL
• Includes cross country validation and application
The Continuum of Performance

- **Limited and mechanistic, some practices are incoherent to AfL with principles**
- **Acceptable performance and routine is developed, most of the practices are coherent with AfL principles**
- **Deliberate planning, more organised with clear strategies and mechanisms, develop a repertoire of effective practices.**
- **Important decisions through assessment and evaluation in learning and teaching are made to help develop better strategies and approaches in learning, teaching and assessment.**
- **Implementation relies on perception of situations, provide expert AfL leadership, advice and support to colleagues.**
- **Creative and innovative approach are used. Existing assumptions about assessment competence are critiqued and challenged.**

Graduate | Competent | Proficient | Expert | Teacher Leader/Advance
# Teacher as an Assessor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPABILITIES</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
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</table>
| DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT TASKS | Links assessment tasks with learning outcomes  
Identifies appropriate assessment tasks  
Designs assessment tasks |
| MEASUREMENT OF STUDENTS’ LEARNING | Uses a range of assessment methods  
Gathers a range of evidence of students’ learning  
Uses strategic questioning to explore students’ learning  
Uses rubrics to assess students’ learning  
Records evidence of student's learning progress and performance |
| ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF ASSESSMENT | Considers factors that affect students' performance  
(length of assessment, suitability of task, language, design, readiness of students)  
Avoids interference in task completion (e.g. ability to read, write, personality, physical condition or knowledge of irrelevant background information)  
Establishes dialogue/conversation with colleagues to ensure consistent, fair and comparable judgment of students’ learning |
# Teacher as a Pedagogy Expert

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEVELOPMENT OF LESSON</th>
<th>Capabilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Translates learning standards (curriculum content) to learning outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses different sources of information in developing learning outcomes</td>
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<td>Identifies appropriate teaching methods</td>
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<td>Considers students’ prior knowledge in lesson planning</td>
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<td>Considers students’ current level of abilities</td>
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<td>Considers students’ interest</td>
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<td>Plans lessons according to students’ learning needs</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELECTION OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES</th>
<th>Capabilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tailors lessons to available resources</td>
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<td>Develops teaching and learning resources</td>
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<tr>
<th>ADHERENCE TO ETHICAL STANDARDS IN ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>Capabilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensures that there are no assessment practices that harm students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensures that assessment results reflect students’ “true” learning</td>
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<td>Maintains confidentiality in dealing with assessment results</td>
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# Teacher as a Student Partner

## EMPLOYS STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPABILITIES</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Makes students understand the learning outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involves students in the development of learning outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involves students in the development of success criteria/rubrics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explains the success criteria/rubrics</td>
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## PROVISION OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS’ INVOLVEMENT IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPABILITIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develops students’ capabilities in self and peer assessments</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engages students in self-assessment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engages students in peer-assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderates feedback and results of self and peer assessment</td>
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## COMMUNICATION of ASSESSMENT RESULTS

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<tr>
<th>CAPABILITIES</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicates assessment results to students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discusses feedback with students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gives feedback on students’ strengths and weaknesses</td>
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<td>Gives feedback related to criteria</td>
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<td>Assists students in goal-setting</td>
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# Teacher as a Motivator

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPABILITIES</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADAPTATION OF TEACHING</td>
<td>Uses a variety of teaching and learning methodologies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Uses flexible teaching processes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Makes informed decisions in adapting teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENT THAT VALUES INDIVIDUAL LEARNERS</td>
<td>Respects individual learners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develops an environment of trust</td>
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<td>Ensures openness in the class</td>
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<td>Builds students’ interest to learn</td>
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<td>Demonstrates belief in the ability of every student to improve</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIRECTING STUDENTS TOWARDS GOAL ATTAINMENT</td>
<td>Affirms students’ good performance</td>
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<td>Clarifies students misconceptions</td>
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<td>Reinforces positive learning attitude of students</td>
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## Teacher as a Teacher Learner

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPABILITIES</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENGAGEMENT IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RELATED TO AfL</strong></td>
<td>Participates in professional development related to assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engages in self-assessment/reflection</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Engages in peer-review of teaching performance</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UTILISATION OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS TO ENGAGE IN PD RELATED TO CURRICULUM-CONTENT</strong></td>
<td>Searches new and relevant subject-content information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifies subject-content knowledge needs</td>
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<td>Undertakes further education/training</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAPABILITIES</td>
<td>INDICATORS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY’S TRUST</strong></td>
<td>Collaborates with family to establish home activities to support student learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Informs community of the assessment practices</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reports to community about students’ performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reports the overall performance of students for accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UTILISATION OF ASSESSMENT INFORMATION FROM STAKEHOLDERS</strong></td>
<td>Identifies key assessment and teaching issues for review</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Analysis and uses information from stakeholders</td>
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How will the framework be used?

1. Teachers’ Self-Assessment
2. Teachers’ Peer-Assessment
3. Principals’ Direct Assessment
The AfL Literacy Professional Learning Framework

Development

Establishment of standards and development of assessment tool.
Assessment tool should support learning by providing teachers with opportunities to identify their present level of assessment literacy and to determine the next steps to enhance their capabilities.

Assessment

Teachers’ self-assessment and peer-assessment by their department heads or principals.
Teachers and principals use the assessment tool and the results are moderated and discussed by both parties. Teachers provide evidence of their performance while principals give feedback to help teachers improve.

Designing

Development of needs-based assessment literacy program.
The assessment literacy program should be consistent with AfL principles where prior knowledge and interests of teachers are taken into consideration. The literacy program should support teachers toward achievement of the highest level of competence.

Implementation

Teachers’ training uses a wide range of methodologies from informal to a more formal program.
At the school level, principals should create an environment where teachers can form a community of learners to engage in sharing and learning from each other. Also, a strong support and scaffolding should be provided to them.

Monitoring

Continuous self- and peer-assessments and moderation.
The teachers’ performance evaluation should be perceived by teachers as more of a learning activity rather than an assessment one. This can happen if the principals and department heads establish trust between and amongst teachers.

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Key Principles of AfL Literacy Professional Learning

• Consider where the individual teachers are in terms of their AfL competence, where they need to go and how best to get there.

• Start from setting and sharing the success criteria and the competency standards.

• Feedback from principals/department heads should be extensively used.

• Develop self- and peer-assessments capabilities of teachers (Davison, 2012).
Key Principles of AfL Literacy Professional Learning

• Not only training teachers but providing them day-to-day opportunities to engage in moderation and sharing.
• Not only for teachers but for all stakeholders including administrators, parents and students.
• Assume that all stakeholders can improve in their assessment literacy (Davison, 2012).
Future Work

1. Series of Validation with EAL Teachers
2. EAL Teachers’ Self-Assessment
3. Development of EAL Teachers’ AfL Literacy Program
Project Team

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University of Melbourne
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Questions/issues/concerns???