

JCLC Intermediate ESL: NEEDS ANALYSIS

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What was known about the students:

I was asked to teach community literacy in Watertown, Wisconsin, for a group of adult ESL intermediate level students who are mostly Spanish speaking Mexicans, though a couple of them are Portuguese speakers from other South American countries. I was told that the textbook/workbook approach has been working well for this group because their writing skills and academic skills are much weaker than their speaking and communicative skills. I was told that what this group most needed was a teacher who could differentiate the given curriculum for the multi-levels in the group.

The process of this needs assessment

Before I actually began teaching the class in September of 2016, I googled and read all I could find on the internet about the JCLC programs. Soon after I began teaching, I e-mailed questions regarding needs assessment to both the Instructional Coordinator and the previous teacher. In the first days of teaching the class I tweaked some of the *Step Forward* lesson activities as a means to gather information about their backgrounds, interests, skill levels, and goals. I also designed some lessons specifically for the purpose of advancing skills while at the same time gleaned insight to their backgrounds, interests, skills, and goals. The timeline activity, which can be found in the appendix, is an example of one of the first of these kinds of activities incorporating text and workbook aims and objectives into needs analysis tools. Through a combination of formal and informal assessment, direct questioning, illuminative assessment, and summative assessment, as well as through ongoing communication with the JCLC Instructional Coordinator, I continue to gather information regarding their background, needs, skill levels, interests, learning styles, and goals in order to tailor learning to suit their needs.

Due to privacy rights, demographics are limited.

What I knew of their demographics at the outset:

- they live in or near Watertown, WI– for some, addresses frequently change
- most are Mexican immigrants
- intermediate level ESL
- adults

- connected to community literacy program

What I learned about their demographics:

- Most are parents or grandparents.
- Phone numbers for most of my students are available, though some don't have phones at all, and those who have phone numbers may have their phones switched off without notice due to inability to pay.
- Some are not documented citizens and are very nervous in the post-election political climate. One student voiced concern for potentially being deported. Two of her sons who have been raised in the US since they were less than five years old have been deported in their early 20's and she is concerned that the same may happen to other family members, including herself, as a result of new policies from the Trump administration.
- There are many gaps in their designated intermediate level; their speaking skills tend to be significantly higher than their writing skills; most are high beginner level for writing.
- They want to improve their English for their jobs; most want to improve their writing skills.
- They want/need English skills for advancing in their work-related goals; essentially all want/need increased income, and report that obtaining (and maintaining) work is becoming increasingly competitive, with some employers requiring testing in English; a couple of them need to be able to write for their jobs. Most work in factories or cleaning or caretaking.
- They work many hours, long days, often over-time, and on holidays; some work full-time and part-time jobs; they receive low pay.
- They are optimistic and cheerful despite their difficult lives.
- Most resist using computers.
- Of those who have phones, most utilize texting.
- Most function daily in Spanish and use English only if they have to.
- Family and their peer network through community literacy is their greatest resource besides the Jefferson Community Literacy Council.

- They have a very strong network of Spanish language resources and are able to function contentedly in the local community without English language skills.

Needs of students, expressed by students, include the following:

- More money
- More sleep
- More English skills
- Improved spelling and writing
- Improved ability to speak with co-workers and bosses
- Aspiration to start a husband & wife team window cleaning business
- Fear of deportation

Needs of stakeholders addressed in accompanying .pdf: *JCLC. Annual Report 2014-2015.*

Students' needs, as expressed by other interested parties, are generally conveyed to me by the JCLC Instructional Coordinator: I remain in close contact with the JCLC Curriculum Coordinator. She is my go-to person for questions and concerns regarding my teaching. She informs me of new students, exiting students, and keeps me up-to-date regarding community programs of interest to my students, and other developments and updates from the JCLC as they pertain to my teaching. She sends new students to my class according to her intake assessment procedures which is outlined in the accompanying .pdf, *Intake form 2012 2013.*

Summative Assessment includes the BEST Plus test, administered twice in the school year.

Formative Assessment tools that I have created include the following:

- TIMELINE: Jobs.Goals.Past.Present.Future
- REFLECTIVE: Reflect on your learning...Know-Learn-Do
- SURVEYS/QUESTIONAIRES: Check-Ins. Exit Slips. Needs Analysis
- ILLUMINATIVE: Impromptu Illuminative Assessment
- CHART SPEED & ACCURACY-VERBS

Formative Assessment tools I have borrowed include the 4-ways Goal Sheet (Health, Education, Family, Work), which is used at the Madison Literacy Network.

In-Depth Summary:

At the time I accepted the teaching assignment for this particular class, I held certain assumptions about my students' general levels of education and income based on the fact that they are ESL students via the community literacy council. The fact that they do not enroll in English courses through the local technical college speaks to their low English skill level resulting largely from disrupted formal education, and their poverty; these two factors impact and compound one another exponentially. These assumptions have been confirmed by the JCLC's Instructional Coordinator, but I hypothesized that it is likely that many, if not most, or even all of my students are very remarkable, impressive individuals whose English skill levels do not speak to their overall level of intelligence, nor to their overall academic potential, even if they have no academic history pre-dating their study of English through the JCLC. Despite the common notion that all ESL students' have amazing stories to share, I do not pry into their past because of the traumatic nature of the average Mexican immigrant's experience. I know that many prefer not to discuss it. Perhaps, in time, these conversations will emerge, as they feel more comfortable sharing their journeys.

When I was asked if I would be interested in teaching the adult ESL class in Watertown, I was told it was a small group of intermediate level adult ELLs who were mostly Mexican immigrants, and who were also a very dedicated bunch of students. I was told that they had been working through the Level 1 text and workbook in Jayme Adelson-Goldstein's *Step Forward* Series, and that they were near to completion. Later it was revealed that the students were not as close to completion as the Instructional Coordinator had anticipated. Nevertheless, the Instructional Coordinator expressed open optimism and enthusiasm for switching to Oxford's *Venture* series after completing the *Step Forward* book, and she explained that Oxford's *Venture* series does a much better job of offering ways to differentiate. She said they were looking forward to having a better built-in construct for differentiating instruction. I was told that the one thing that this group could really use is a teacher who is comfortable with differentiating instruction.

I had originally planned to conduct an in-depth needs assessment, but was told by the Instructional Coordinator that asking these students anything more than a handful of questions would be overload for them, and that they were a group that tends to mysteriously disappear as soon as they hear any hint of the word "test"—even if they are told that the purpose of the "test" is not to measure their English, but rather to help us teachers do a better job of teaching. The teacher I replaced also offered some advice on testing this group, based on what he experienced during the previous testing session: He told me that if (or when) I am ever in the position of having to administer a test, I should emphasize pre-instruction about what it means to take a test, and how to take a test – ie., that taking a test means doing your own work, not consulting your neighbor, not conversing, and not looking at your neighbor's answers.

To get a better handle on the history of the class, I sent e-mail inquiries to both the Instructional Coordinator and the teacher I was replacing to discover more about what kinds of assessments had already been used when placing my students' English in this intermediate level class. Both of their responses are included in the Appendix. I found out that the JCLC uses the BEST plus test to measure student's progress. I was told that all students in the JCLC programs are tested twice a year using the BEST plus, and that there are two parts to each test. There is an oral test to assess speaking and listening, and there is a standardized written test to assess reading comprehension and writing. First, near the beginning of the year, they are tested orally for speaking and listening by a BEST plus certified person in the JCLC organization. This test takes approximately twenty minutes per student and is done individually; students are pulled out, one by one, from a regular class session. This can take several sessions depending on the number of students enrolled. Then around that same time of the new school year when they are being tested orally, they are also tested for reading comprehension and writing skill using the standardized, written BEST plus test, which is administered by the teacher during a regular class session. Then at the end of the school year, students are once again tested using the standardized written BEST plus test for reading and writing, administered by the teacher, and at roughly the same time, a certified BEST plus person from the JCLC comes in and pulls them individually from class to orally assess their speaking and listening skills.

Typically, the end of the school year results are used as the pre-learning skill score for the subsequent school year, but since the makers of the BEST plus test have changed the test and the cut scores as of June 30, 2016, none of the previous data qualifies as valid "pre-test" data for this year's testing. Essentially what we have is a "confusing mess", according to our Instructional Coordinator, and because we do not have any qualifying "pre-test data" due to the changes enacted by the makers of the BEST plus, we are going to have to do extra testing this year. In other words, this year the JCLC will be required to test again in November/December, since the testing that was done at the beginning of the school year will have to be used as the pre-test data, which means that the time frame for developing and improving skills between the two tests used to measure growth will be significantly shorter than in previous years. Essentially, it will be cut in half.

According to the Instructional Coordinator, for a group of students who have a history of acute "testing phobia", this additional testing is going to stress them significantly, not to mention that they are experiencing loss of a teacher that they had greatly admired. I am told that I would be wise to minimize any kind of additional assessment that asks more than a small handful of questions at any one time.

What I learned by sending inquiries to the teacher and Instructional Coordinator is that this the JCLC Instructional Coordinator (who is very skilled and talented in the art of differentiating instruction) had begun teaching this class using the *Step Forward* series, and had handed the class off to a volunteer teacher-in-training who

had been observing & assisting her for a few months. Both had followed Adelson-Goldstein's curriculum, and the students had become very used to the format and seemed to be very happy with this approach. Every one of the students had purchased their own books, so it seemed unwise for me to step in and tell them that we would no longer be using the text or the workbook. Students continually enter and exit the class with little to no advance notice, as is the nature of reality for this group of language learners who confront struggles arising from poverty daily, and so we do our best to accommodate the ebb and flow of numbers from one class to the next. The Instructional Coordinator has repeatedly mentioned that working with this unpredictable, ever-changing, student roster is a great challenge for even very skilled teachers.

Using Richards' recommendations for needs analysis tools found in Chapter Three of our text, *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*, as a foundation, I devised a few sets of questions that I thought might be helpful or insightful for the purposes of planning and developing curriculum for this group. Upon giving consideration to the strong suggestions that my students would likely NOT respond favorably to needs assessment questionnaires, inventories, or any such thing, I decided that rather than administer all of the questions at one time, I would break them down into exit slips of no more than five or six questions that could be completed in a minute or two at the end of each class, using simple response forms resembling course evaluation materials where students respond by circling an image, yes/no, a high-to-low range of numbers, or a simple phrase that could be explained to them quickly and easily in advance, and also, while never requiring an open response, at the same time, always welcoming open ended responses or feedback. These forms can be found in the accompanying .pdf, *Check-Ins. Exit Slips. Needs Analysis*.

At this time of year, I am expecting the whole class to be tested once again, in a similar fashion as they experienced in the beginning of the school year, prior to my arrival. A few weeks ago, the certified administrator arrived at our class, unannounced, and tested six of the students in our two-hour class period. She has not yet returned to test the remaining students, so I have prepared some back up lesson plan activities to accommodate pull-outs on whatever day(s) she might arrive to complete the remainder of the assessments. The JCLC tries to give me advance notice of her arrival. So far what I experienced was a no-show followed by an unannounced arrival. I was told that I would be asked to administer the written exam at around the same time that the S&L testing would be conducted, but as of this time, I have not yet been contacted regarding the test I will be asked to proctor.

Students have been asking if I will come to Watertown to teach on other nights, so recently, I found a few spots on the calendar to add to the weekly two-hour class session. In brainstorming some options with our Instructional Coordinator, I threw out the possibility of going Christmas caroling, but was told that the community where this class takes place "might not be the best place to take our students door to door" as "many of our learners are on edge due to the results of the presidential election." This was an illuminating piece of information that shed light on some

important aspects of who these students are and their relationship within the larger community. It tells me these students are up against many obstacles to learning, and are facing institutionalized racism daily. Anything that can be incorporated into the curriculum that helps empower students to combat, or overcome, the prevailing racist attitudes, and closed-minded, small-town mentality will be beneficial and welcome by the students. I responded to this enlightening awareness in our last class by incorporating the lyrics from Woody Guthrie's song, "This Land is Your Land" as a thematic connection to the tapestry of American folk culture that underpins our national Thanksgiving tradition.

Most students say they need better English skills to help them at work so they can earn more money.

I used the 4-Way GOALS form, borrowed from the Madison Literacy Network where I have been tutoring for a couple of years, and had all of my JCLC students write words, phrases, or sentences explaining personal goals for each of the categories: health, family, education, employment. This form can be found in the Appendix.

Each of my students had been through an intake assessment process with the Instructional Coordinator upon coming to the JCLC, at which time they were tested for skill levels in the four domains, and demonstrated their commitment to advancing their English skills. Through that process, they were either recommended to study in a one-to-one private tutor session, or to enter a class such as the "intermediate" class that I am teaching. Some of the students have been attending the intermediate group-class for nearly one year, while others have only recently joined. I was given a print-out of the most current BEST plus data that is available on the students to date. Essentially, that print-out is a list of students indicating whether they are high beginner, low beginner, etc.. What I found most interesting in this data is that over the span of time, some are documented as having regressed in their skill level(s). The JCLC Intake form is the accompanying document, .pdf, *Intake form 2012 2013*.

To accommodate my students' needs, I continuously use multiple strategies such as the *Impromptu Illuminative Assessment* and the *Chart Speed & Accuracy-Verbs* activities, which are included in the Appendix. These types of lesson activities prove useful for assessing students' skills and needs, and learning more about their backgrounds, interests, and personal goals including health, education, family, work, and hobbies. I frequently remind them that if they would like individual tutoring, I am available, and that they can/should call me if they have any questions or problems using English. Two students have asked to arrange private tutoring sessions with me, and I will be attending a community listening session addressing post-election anxieties at the community college with one of my students this Saturday.

APPENDIX

E-MAIL RESPONSE - INQUIRY TO JCLC INSTRUCTIONAL COORDINATOR

From: J [REDACTED] H [REDACTED]
Subject: Assessment data for Watertown class
Date: October 5, 2016 at 12:13 PM
To: Lorraine Best lblibraryservices@me.com

Hi Lorraine,

Here is that assessment data I promised. Some learners from the Watertown class have not been tested. Since the class has been going on for a little over a year some have pre and post data and others just have pre test data...and for others we don't have any data yet. This is where things can get really difficult to keep track of! You can check the attachments* for some information about what all these numbers mean in terms of ability. You might notice that the cut scores for the Listening and Speaking Test (BEST plus) are different on the attachment. This is because they changed the test and cut scores as of June 30, 2016. The listening and speaking test scores listed were gathered before that date. The test is now different and we cannot use any of the previous data as pre-test data for FY 15/16. It's kind of a confusing mess. At any rate this information should help you gauge an approximate student level.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

J [REDACTED]

B [REDACTED] P [REDACTED]
Reading & Writing - 4/28/16 - 50- NRS Low Intermediate

S [REDACTED] F [REDACTED]
Listening & Speaking - 3/11/15 - 544 - NRS Level 6 - Advanced

M [REDACTED] T [REDACTED] R [REDACTED]
Listening & Speaking - 4/28/2016 – 462 - NRS Level 4 – Low Intermediate
Listening & Speaking – 10/15/2016 – 423 – NRS Level 3 – High Beginning
Reading & Writing – 8/11/2016 – 52 – NRS Level 2 – Low Beginning

G [REDACTED] R [REDACTED]
Listening & Speaking – 4/28/2016 – 487 – NRS Level 5 – High Intermediate (post-test showed no gains)
Reading & Writing – 8/11/2016 – 49 – NRS Level 2 – Low Beginning
Reading & Writing – 8/11/2016 – 49 – NRS Level 2 – Low Beginning

V [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Reading & Writing – 8/11/2016 – NRS Level 3 – High Beginning

G [REDACTED] U [REDACTED]
Listening & Speaking - 2/10/2015 – 385 - NRS Level 1 – Low Beginning
Listening & Speaking – 4/28/2016 – 511 – NRS Level 6 - Advanced
Reading & Writing – 8/11/2016 – 54 - NRS Level 3 – High Beginning

V [REDACTED] E [REDACTED]

Listening & Speaking – 10/13/2015 – 403 – NRS Level 2 – Low Beginning
Listening & Speaking - 4/28/2016 – 450 – NRS Level 4 – Low Intermediate
Reading & Writing – 8/11/2016 – 52 – NRS Level 2 – Low Beginning

A [REDACTED] U [REDACTED]

Listening & Speaking – 2/24/2015 – 359 – NRS Level 1 –Beginning ESL Literacy
Listening & Speaking - 4/28/2016 – 474 – NRS Level 5 – High Intermediate
Reading & Writing – 8/11/2016 – 68 – NRS Level 5 – High Intermediate

A [REDACTED] G [REDACTED]

Listening & Speaking – 10/15/2015 – 369 – NRS Level 1 – Beginning ESL Literacy
Listening & Speaking - 4/28/2016 – 414 – NRS Level 2 – Low Beginning ESL
Reading & Writing – 8/11/2016 – 42 – NRS Level 2 – Low Beginning ESL

M [REDACTED] A [REDACTED]

Reading & Writing – 4/28/2016 – 53 – NRS Level 3 – High Beginning
Reading & Writing – 8/11/2016 – 61 – NRS Level 3 – High Beginning

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J [REDACTED] H [REDACTED]

Instructional Coordinator
Jefferson County Literacy Council
218 S. Wisconsin Drive Suite #9, Mailbox #7
PH: [REDACTED]

***NOTE: refers to accompanying document: .pdf, *Test Benchmarks_NRS ESL descriptors*.**

E-MAIL RESPONSE - INQUIRY TO PREVIOUS INSTRUCTOR

Hi Lorraine,

Good to hear from you. I'll do my best to answer your questions in the order you outlined.

1. Had you taught the Schurz group prior to this school year?

No. My first exposure to this group of students occurred sometime in

January when I began observing and volunteering with J [REDACTED]
H [REDACTED].

2. Where did you begin with them when you launched this school year?

I took over the class on 5/12 with only three remaining class periods before a two-week break. Given the circumstances, I made few changes and opted to continue from where J [REDACTED] had left off: Step Forward Level 1, "Shop & Spend" (Unit 7??). After the two-week reset, many of the same students returned, so I picked up where I left off and continued on with the textbook while incorporating supplementary material I deemed relevant.

3. What kinds of assessment, either formally or informally, did you use (if any) before, during or after lessons to determine whether students retained the lesson objectives?

Formally, J [REDACTED] administered the BEST test to most of the students during the spring session. These results provided a reasonable baseline for gauging overall student progress. I retested the class on 8/11. Informally, I relied heavily on the homework assignments to check for retention of individual lesson objectives. I made an effort to solicit feedback through a combination of oral and written tasks.

4. How many students were attending the class at the beginning of this school year?

I averaged 12 students during the first few weeks of class.

I hope this helps!

[REDACTED]

Madison Literacy Network

Name: _____

Date: _____

WORK

EDUCATION

GOALS
What goals do you want to reach?
What do you want to learn or be able to do?

FAMILY or PERSONAL

HEALTH

IMPROMPTU ILLUMINATIVE ASSESSMENT:

Warm-Up:

Review Question words w/ past tense and pronoun you:

Who
What
When + did you + go, do, see, hear, taste, touch, smell, (any verb)
Where
Why

Brainstorm (timed write): verbs (one minute) - list

I went to _____

I went with _____

I went by (train, car, plane) → advanced I drove, I flew, I + irregular verb)

I went + (verb+ing) eg., shopping

Have students practice asking and answering each other questions about what they did over the holiday break last week.

*In presenting the question-words warm-up activity above, one student was having trouble with understanding “how”; the opportunity for an impromptu, informal illuminative assessment arose, so I took advantage of it. I brainstormed examples of the how question form: How are you? How will you get home after class? How do you make tamales? How do you do things? How do you **learn** things? How do you learn **English**? How do you learn English **best**? How do you learn **English** best? With lots of gesturing, and a hint....it’s like cómo, it became evident that she understood, so I elaborated...Do you like to do **worksheets**? **Read**? **Listen**? **Talk**? **Write**? How do **you** learn English best? And I went around the class asking each, “How do **you** learn English best?” Most said listening, one said writing. None said that the textbook/workbook was their best way of learning, so I will explore that further in subsequent lessons.*

CHART SPEED & ACCURACY – VERBS:

First Timed Write: Nov. 29, 2016

1 minute : VERBS – action words

Least: 3 Most: 6

*eat	*cook	clean
*shopping	reading	make chicken & rice
walking	drive	looking
*sleeping	reading	running
make food	writing	
	caring for family	

English dominant students need to practice skills or processes at least 24 times to obtain 80% proficiency. ELLs need even more practice (Hill & Flynn, p. 84).

I waffled over having students do a timed write because many of the students in the class still have one leg in the high beginner level in certain aspects, but this verb activity seemed like a very natural progression following the question-forms warm-up activity, and the Hill & Flynn factoid noted above tipped the scale in favor of giving the timed-write a try. I prefaced the timed-write by asking, "What are VERBS? What are action words?", displaying their responses on butcher block paper. After coming up with a few examples and it was clear that they understood, I directed them to write as many Verbs (action-words) as they could in one minute. 3 was the fewest, and 7 was the most any of the students came up with, though of the 7, one had to be discounted because it wasn't an action word. Nevertheless, I explained how that word (family) could be made into an action word form, and included it in the combined list of all the words they came up with, which was added to the butcher block paper display. The display became a word wall for them to use as reference in subsequent conversation activities throughout the remainder of our class.

ACCOMANYING DOCUMENTS (.pdf):

- Intake form 2012 2013
- JCLC. Annual Report 2014-2015
- Test Benchmarks_NRS ESL descriptors
- Jobs.Goals.Past.Present.Future
- Reflect on your learning...Know.Need.Want to Do
- Check-Ins. Exit Slips. Needs Analysis

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES TO BE AWARE OF WHEN DOING ACADEMIC RESEARCH:

- <https://www.cuchicago.edu/academics/academic-research/irb-guidance/>
- https://www.cuchicago.edu/globalassets/documents/academics/academic-research/cuc-irb-manual_edited-1214.pdf