Linguistically Responsive Assessment Policy Sample

See below for a sample assessment policy that provides guidelines for assessing foundational skills in English in a way that is responsive to all students and an assessment protocol that can be used to help ensure that multilingual learners (MLs) are not held back in instruction because of primary language influence.

Unity School's K–2 reading assessment policy

This policy is based on the belief that all teachers and leaders share responsibility for student outcomes and that assessment of student learning is an essential component of the teaching and learning process. The policy seeks to establish a consistent approach to assessment and progress monitoring at Unity School that is responsive to student assets and advances literacy skills toward or beyond grade-level reading proficiency.

Our assessment philosophy statements

- We focus on the purpose of assessment over the process of assessment: *the purpose of assessing foundational skills is ensuring that students are proficient in sound-letter correspondences so that they can ultimately use that proficiency in their writing and reading.*
- Assessment involves flexible practices that honor the process of learning the sounds, words, and sentence structures of a new language.
- Quality assessment systems promote student agency through student and teacher goal setting, reflection, and progress monitoring.
- We use a variety of assessments (summative and formative) to engage diverse learners and provide them with multiple opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do.
- Assessments are ongoing and aligned with instructional practices and grade-level expectations.
- Assessments provide important information about students' instructional experiences; therefore, student data is used to plan responsive instruction that moves every student closer to or beyond grade-level reading proficiency expectations.
- We use multiple methods of instruction and assessment to capture student learning, place students in appropriate small groups, and advance them as quickly as possible.
- Assessments provide opportunities for students to communicate their strengths on a regular basis and support and celebrate student learning with families/caregivers.
- We provide students with timely feedback in order to reflect on their current understanding and monitor their own learning.

- Responsive assessment practices require teachers to reflect on any bias against student accents and reinforce precise English articulations through modeling and affirmations of multilingualism (e.g., avoiding language like "wrong" or "incorrect" and instead affirming that students are learning an additional or new way to make sounds).

Unity School's assessment protocol

This suggested "protocol" can be applied regardless of which assessment or type of assessment a school or system uses. It outlines guidelines for honoring language influence so MLs are not held back in the curriculum sequence or small-group work based on primary language influence.

Students may not often hear or have ever pronounced some of the sounds in English, so their mouth muscles will need plenty of time and practice to build those phonemic awareness and articulation skills. Teachers can identify sounds or other foundational skills that are new to MLs that could explain any divergent articulations. See **Bridging Foundational Skills Between Languages** for more information.

We want to ensure assessment practices do not limit 1) student opportunities to advance their literacy skills as quickly as possible or 2) access to the same Tier 1 instruction as their monolingual, English-speaking peers.

Student action	Teacher action

IF a student decodes a majority of, but not all, graphemes (e.g., "sheep" for "ship" or /b/ for /v/)...	THEN, determine if the skill is a comprehension issue or an articulation issue by:
	 1. showing a series of pictures, including one of the word or a word that features the target sound—then asking the student to say or point to the target picture.
	 2. asking the student to:
	    a. encode the sound/word,
	    b. describe the item in another way or use it in a sentence, and/or
	    c. listen to the sounds articulated by the teacher and indicate which one they were trying to articulate themselves.
	
	 See **Being Responsive to Multilingual Learners in Foundational Skills Instruction, strategy 1** or

Student action	Teacher action
If a student demonstrates comprehension…	THEN, move the student to the next skill, but make a note to continue to support mastery toward articulating this skill in future lessons.
IF a student does not demonstrate comprehension yet (e.g., sees a picture of "ship" and writes "sheep")…	THEN, determine if the student has accurate sound-spelling correspondence by saying the target sound and asking the student to encode it. For example: • "Listen to the sound that I am about to make. Then, write that sound down. /i/. How do you write /i/? Write it now please." • "/ee/. How do you spell /ee/? Write that down please."
IF a student demonstrates accurate sound-spelling correspondence and comprehension but is still inaccurately articulating that sound…	THEN, continue to offer more support with articulation and move to the next skill.
IF a student does not demonstrate accurate sound-spelling correspondence yet…	THEN, offer more practice with the sound-spelling correspondence before moving to the next skill.