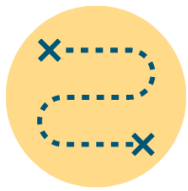COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRESSION TOOL

Student-Centered, Mastery-Based and Self-Paced Learning in the English Learner Classroom

by Alicia Serafin

TOOL DESCRIPTION
A set of examples from an elementary ESL unit that demonstrate student-centered and Competency-Based Progression approaches, including a mastery check and mastery tracker as well as samples from the teacher's curriculum. The mastery check is given to individual students when each is ready, and the teacher uses the tracker to indicate how the student is progressing. These artifacts are included comprehensively to illustrate the competency-based progression.[14]

CRITICAL CONTEXT INFORMATION
These materials were developed for first grade English Learners in a suburban elementary school, aligned with a first grade "living things" essential question and a focus on the skill of comparison.

TOOL & LINKS
- Sample Mastery Check
- Mastery Tracker
- Sample Interactive Deck from the Teacher's Unit
- Sample Student-Facing Video From The Teacher's Unit *available to students via a Learning Management System*

About this Tool & Guidance for Adaptation

As seen in the links above, I created a video series that aligns to a first grade Living Things Essential Question for my ESL students. The presentation deck was used in a backwards design approach and is incorporated in the video. My first grade ESL students create their own research-based top-down web graphic organizer to compare as part of this series of standards-based lessons.

The excerpt from a progress tracker and a mastery check sample with multiple options are also included to illustrate the competency-based progression. These artifacts align with both Competency-Based Progression and Universal Design Practices to ensure accessibility for all learners.

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[14] N.B. *While this tool provides an excellent example of mastery-based learning, it falls in the context of a standards-based rather than fully competency-based school. As a result, students progress toward required standards but not necessarily toward broader competencies.*

Excerpted from *Innovation in Practice: A Student-Centered Learning Toolkit By Teachers, For Teachers.* ©The Teacher Collaborative 2022. Theteachercollaborative.org

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The presentation decks (one of which is linked above) were used in a backwards design approach and are incorporated in each video in the lesson series. My first grade ESL students create their own research-based top-down web graphic organizer to compare as part of these standards-based lessons. These videos and presentation decks can also be used to guide students through the graphic organizer development process.

The excerpt from a progress tracker illustrates the Competency-Based Progression. The mastery check is given to individual students when each is ready to demonstrate mastery.

This competency-based approach works for small groups of students as well in the classroom. If students are absent or need review, the personalized videos are available for them to watch again at their own pace. Students only take mastery checks when each is ready individually. One of the great benefits is the time and space this approach leaves for teachers and students to conference either individually to discuss progress or in small groups when reteaching is needed.

Teacher Narrative

As an ESL Teacher in a low-incidence district, I primarily work with ESL students in small groups outside of their classroom spaces. I teach at the elementary level and tend to work within classrooms to co-teach and then work with small groups for Reader's Workshop and Writer's Workshop.

These presentation and video curriculum materials leverage best practices involved in the Modern Classroom approach (blended instruction, self-paced structures, and mastery-based learning).

I planned, recorded, and enhanced these presentation decks and short video artifacts to deliver new content to students. The excerpt from a progress tracker and a mastery check sample with multiple options are also included to demonstrate the Competency-Based Progression.

Although developing one's own educator videos is time-intensive, especially initially, it is well worth the effort to personalize learning for each student and improve learning opportunities. While some students might be absent, others benefit from watching the content presented multiple times by a familiar instructor who leverages familiar routines. Sharing these videos with families through the use of a Learning Management System provides opportunities for students to watch at home, too. This sharing of resources can strengthen the home-school relationship, especially as caregivers learn more about the content their students are learning.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Alicia Serafin currently teaches English as a Second Language in the Wilmington, Massachusetts Public Elementary Schools. She has been teaching ESL for over 10 years. Alicia is also a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education-approved Professional Development Provider.

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