

Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Dato' Razali Ismail

# LGA3103 Stories for Young Learners

Topic 8: Types of Assessment



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## Topic 8: Types of Assessments

Before we decide *how* to go about assessing 'Stories', we need to be sure *what* it is that we are trying to assess. First of all, what are the learning outcomes? Language Arts:

4.2 By the end of the six year primary schooling, pupils will be able to <b>demonstrate understanding of and express personal response</b> to literary texts.	
Yr 1	4.2.1 Able to <b>demonstrate skills</b> in handling books appropriately.
	4.2.2 Able to <b>talk about</b> book covers, pictures in books with guidance.
Yr 2	4.2.1 Able to <b>respond to</b> book covers, pictures in books, characters, with guidance.
Yr 3	4.2.1 Able to <b>respond to</b> characters, place, in stories with guidance.
4.3 By the end of the six year primary programme, pupils will be able to <b>plan, organise and produce</b> creative works for enjoyment.	
Yr 1	4.3.1 Able to <b>produce</b> simple creative works with guidance based on nursery rhymes, action songs.
	4.3.2 Able to <b>take part</b> with guidance in a performance based on nursery rhymes, action songs, fables.
Yr 2	4.3.1 Able to <b>produce</b> simple creative works with guidance based on action songs, jazz chants, stories.
	4.3.2 Able to <b>take part</b> with guidance in a performance based on action songs, jazz chants, stories.
Yr 3	4.3.1 Able to <b>produce</b> simple creative works with guidance based on jazz chants, poems, action songs, stories.
	4.3.2 Able to <b>perform</b> with guidance based on jazz chants, poems, action songs, stories.

Take note of the **verbs** in the statements because this is what it is we are trying to assess. There are also stories-related standards in the other subjects too.

<b>Listening and speaking</b>	
1.1 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to pronounce words and speak confidently with the correct stress, rhythm and intonation.	
Yr 1, 2, and 3	1.1.2 Able to <b>listen to</b> and <b>enjoy</b> simple stories

<b>Reading</b>	
2.3 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to read independently for information and enjoyment.	
Yr 1 and 2	2.3.1 Able to <b>read</b> simple texts with guidance: fiction, non-fiction
Yr 3	2.3.1 Able to <b>read</b> for information and enjoyment with guidance: fiction, non-fiction

<b>Writing</b>	
3.3 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to <b>write</b> and <b>present ideas</b> through a variety of media using appropriate language, form and style.	
Yr 3	3.3.1 Able to <b>create</b> simple texts using a variety of media with guidance.

We are all familiar with the idea of a written exam to test knowledge, understanding (as long as the skill of writing has been mastered) and even some skills. But how can we assess children's aesthetic response, whether children are listening, and whether they can read?

The following article lists some types of 'alternative' assessments. **Read the article and answer the questions:**

## **Practical Ideas on Alternative Assessment for ESL Students**

*Jo-Ellen Tannenbaum, Montgomery County Public Schools (MD)*

Many educators have come to recognize that alternative assessments are an important means of gaining a dynamic picture of students' academic and linguistic development. "Alternative assessment refers to procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom" (Hamayan, 1995, p. 213). It is particularly useful with English as a Second Language students because it employs strategies that ask students to show what they can do. In contrast to traditional testing, "students are evaluated on what they integrate and produce rather than on what they are able to recall and reproduce" (Huerta- Macias, 1995, p. 9). Although there is no single definition of alternative assessment, the main goal is to "gather evidence about how students are approaching, processing, and completing real-life tasks in a particular domain" (Huerta-Macias, 1995, p. 9). Alternative assessments generally meet the following criteria:

- Focus is on documenting individual student growth over time, rather than comparing students with one another.
- Emphasis is on students' strengths (what they know), rather than weaknesses (what they don't know).
- Consideration is given to the learning styles, language proficiencies, cultural and educational backgrounds, and grade levels of students.

Alternative assessment includes a variety of measures that can be adapted for different situations. This Digest provides examples of measures that are well suited for assessing ESL students.

### **Nonverbal Assessment Strategies**

#### ***Physical Demonstration.***

To express academic concepts without speech, students can point or use other gestures. They can also be asked to perform hands-on tasks or to act out vocabulary, concepts, or events. As a comprehension check in a unit on Native Americans, for example, teachers can ask students to respond with thumbs up, thumbs down, or other nonverbal signs to true or false statements or to indicate whether the teacher has grouped illustrations (of homes, food, environment, clothing, etc.) under the correct tribe name. The teacher can use a checklist to record student responses over time.

#### ***Pictorial Products.***

To elicit content knowledge without requiring students to speak or write, teachers can ask students to produce and manipulate drawings, dioramas, models, graphs, and charts. When studying Colonial America, for example, teachers can give students a map of the colonies and labels with the names of

the colonies. Students can then attempt to place the labels in the appropriate locations. This labelling activity can be used across the curriculum with diagrams, webs, and illustrations.

To culminate a unit on butterflies, teachers can ask beginning ESL students to illustrate, rather than explain, the life cycle of butterflies. Students can point to different parts of a butterfly on their own drawing or on a diagram as an assessment of vocabulary retention. Pictorial journals can be kept during the unit to record observations of the butterflies in the classroom or to illustrate comprehension of classroom material about types of butterflies, their habitats, and their characteristics.

### ***K-W-L Charts***

Many teachers have success using K-W-L charts (what I *know*/what I *want* to know/what I've *learned*) to begin and end a unit of study, particularly in social studies and science. Before the unit, this strategy enables teachers to gain an awareness of students' background knowledge and interests. Afterward, it helps teachers assess the content material learned. K-W-L charts can be developed as a class activity or on an individual basis. For students with limited English proficiency, the chart can be completed in the first language or with illustrations.

### **Sample K-W-L Chart**

K	W	L
Lincoln was important. His face is on a penny. He's dead now. I think Lincoln was a President. He was a tall person.	Why is Lincoln famous? Was he a good President? Why is he on a penny? Did he have a family? How did he die?	Lincoln was President of the U.S. He was the 16th President. There was a war in America when Lincoln was President. He let the slaves go free. Two of his sons died while he was still alive.

Before a unit of study, teachers can have students fill in the K and W columns by asking them what they know about the topic and what they would like to know by the end of the unit. This helps to keep students focused and interested during the unit and gives them a sense of accomplishment when they fill in the L column following the unit and realize that they have learned something.

### ***Oral Performances or Presentations***

Performance-based assessments include interviews, oral reports, role plays, describing, explaining, summarizing, retelling, paraphrasing stories or text material, and so on. Oral assessments should be conducted on an ongoing basis to monitor comprehension and thinking skills.

When conducting interviews in English with students in the early stages of language development to determine English proficiency and content knowledge, teachers are advised to use visual cues as much as possible and allow for a minimal amount of English in the responses. Pierce and O'Malley (1992) suggest having students choose one or two pictures they would like to talk about and leading the students by asking questions, especially ones that elicit the use of academic language (comparing, explaining, describing, analysing, hypothesizing, etc.) and vocabulary pertinent to the topic.

Role plays can be used across the curriculum with all grade levels and with any number of people. For example, a teacher can take on the role of a character who knows less than the students about a particular subject area. Students are motivated to convey facts or information prompted by questions from the character. This is a fun-filled way for a teacher to conduct informal assessments of students' knowledge in any subject (Kelner, 1993).

Teachers can also ask students to use role play to express mathematical concepts. For example, a group of students can become a numerator, a denominator, a fraction line, a proper fraction, an improper fraction, and an equivalent fraction. Speaking in the first person, students can introduce themselves and their functions in relationship to one another (Kelner, 1993). Role plays can also be used in science to demonstrate concepts such as the life cycle.

In addition, role plays can serve as an alternative to traditional book reports. Students can transform themselves into a character or object from the book (Kelner, 1993). For example, a student might become Christopher Columbus, one of his sailors, or a mouse on the ship, and tell the story from that character's point of view. The other students can write interview questions to pose to the various characters.

### ***Oral and Written Products***

Some of the oral and written products useful for assessing ESL students' progress are content area thinking and learning logs, reading response logs, writing assignments (both structured and creative), dialogue journals, and audio or video cassettes.

***Content area logs*** are designed to encourage the use of metacognitive strategies when students read expository text. Entries can be made on a form with these two headings: What I Understood/What I Didn't Understand (ideas or vocabulary).

***Reading response logs*** are used for students' written responses or reactions to a piece of literature. Students may respond to questions--some generic, some specific to the literature--that encourage critical thinking, or they may copy a brief text on one side of the page and write their reflections on the text on the other side.

Beginning ESL students often experience success when an expository *writing assignment* is controlled or structured. The teacher can guide students through a pre-writing stage, which includes discussion, brainstorming, webbing, outlining, and so on. The results of pre-writing, as well as the independently written product, can be assessed.

Student writing is often motivated by content themes. Narrative stories from characters' perspectives (e.g., a sailor accompanying Christopher Columbus, an Indian who met the Pilgrims, a drop of water in the water cycle, etc.) would be valuable inclusions in a student's writing portfolio.

***Dialogue journals*** provide a means of interactive, ongoing correspondence between students and teachers. Students determine the choice of topics and participate at their level of English language proficiency. Beginners can draw pictures that can be labelled by the teacher.

**Audio and video cassettes** can be made of student oral readings, presentations, dramatics, interviews, or conferences (with teacher or peers).

### **Portfolios**

Portfolios are used to collect samples of student work over time to track student development. Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991) suggest that, among other things, teachers do the following: maintain anecdotal records from their reviews of portfolios and from regularly scheduled conferences with students about the work in their portfolios; keep checklists that link portfolio work with criteria that they consider integral to the type of work being collected; and devise continua of descriptors to plot student achievement. Whatever methods teachers choose, they should reflect with students on their work, to develop students' ability to critique their own progress.

The following types of materials can be included in a portfolio:

- Audio- and videotaped recordings of readings or oral presentations.
- Writing samples such as dialogue journal entries, book reports, writing assignments (drafts or final copies), reading log entries, or other writing projects.
- Art work such as pictures or drawings, and graphs and charts.
- Conference or interview notes and anecdotal records.
- Checklists (by teacher, peers, or student).
- Tests and quizzes.

To gain multiple perspectives on students' academic development, it is important for teachers to include more than one type of material in the portfolio.

### **Conclusion**

Alternative assessment holds great promise for ESL students. Although the challenge to modify existing methods of assessment and to develop new approaches is not an easy one, the benefits for both teachers and students are great. The ideas and models presented here are intended to be adaptable, practical, and realistic for teachers who are dedicated to creating meaningful and effective assessment experiences for ESL students.

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(Tannenbaum, 1996)

### Questions for Practical Ideas on Alternative Assessments

1. When and how can 'alternative assessments' be used? .....

.....

2. Why is it particularly useful with ESL students? .....

.....

3. How is it different from traditional testing? .....

.....

4. What is the main goal of alternative assessment? .....

.....

5. Summarise the three criteria for alternative assessment.

- .....
- .....
- .....

6. What kind of physical demonstrations can students give for academic concepts?

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.....  
.....

7. How is a record kept of student responses? .....

8. How can a teacher elicit content knowledge without asking students to write or speak?

.....

9. Give some examples of performance-based assessments. ....

.....

10. What five oral and written products are described in the article?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....



11. What are portfolios used for? .....

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12. What do teachers do? .....

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13. What *should* teachers do? .....

14. What might a portfolio contain?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

15. Why is it important to include more than one type of material?

.....

***The following anecdotal paper gives an example of using Oral Performances or Presentations as well as Portfolios with primary school students as an assessment.***

## Assessment of Primary School Students in Performing Arts

by Ruth Wickham, Brighton Education Training Fellow, IPGKDRI

### Introduction

Over a period of fifteen years I taught in several state primary schools in Western Australia as an 'Arts Specialist'. The Arts is one of eight learning areas in the Australian Curriculum Framework, which lists student learning outcomes without specifying content. The teacher is required to demonstrate progress of each child through the various levels of the framework.

While regular classroom teachers in West Australian schools have their own class in front of them every moment of the week except for three hours, as a specialist I saw every class in the school, K-7, once or twice a week and the size of the schools varied from 300 – 1000 pupils. My problem was to get to know the names *and* abilities of every single child.

Especially at the beginning, I needed to have each individual child present themselves before me, tell me their name, and then show me what they could do – while I recorded marks and comments.

### Performances for Assessment

Clearly what was needed was an opportunity to watch a performance or presentation by each child. However, a great many of the children suffered from varying degrees of shyness, and although a few of the children could sing, dance or play a musical instrument, many of them had little or nothing to offer by way of entertainment for the rest of the class – whom I needed to sit quietly while I observed and assessed.

Therefore I created a system of teaching and assessment that not only worked for me but was eagerly accepted by my students over the years and through several different schools.

#### **1. Dealing with the shyness**

Firstly I had to deal with the shyness. I purchased a microphone and small speaker system, and every child (from K – 7) was required to first speak, and eventually sing, on the microphone. The first time with the little children I would sit with them in a circle and hand the microphone around, and each child said "Hello, I'm ....." This was my first chance to learn their names, and for many of the children the first time they heard their own voice clearly. (Normally we only hear our own voice through the thickness of the bones and muscles in our head, and it has a different sound.) Most children giggle when they do this, and an enjoyable time is had by all.

When it came time for the performance, this was the minimum requirement for all, especially shy children. If nothing else, they would stand up and say a greeting and their name. But they could only do this once – the next time they would have to add something.

Another way that I dealt with the shyness was with drums. The children lined up and took it in turns to play a rhythm on the drums. I had a full drum kit in the classroom, and they could try any of the drum sounds, so it was quite loud – and for the shy children to find themselves making that much noise was at first shocking and then therapeutic as they seemed to start feeling less powerless.

The third solution for shyness was using puppets. Some children respond well to a hand puppet and are happy to let the audience focus on the puppet speaking or singing rather than looking right at them. For the genuinely severely shy children I used marionette-type puppets, and the child would stand over them and make them dance to music. (They would be in full view of the audience, not behind a puppet theatre, and again, they had to improve on this performance the next time.)

## **2. Group Support**

Partly to be able to allow all of the children to be assessed in a reasonable time, and partly again to help with shyness and other limitations, I allowed the children to perform in pairs or groups. Obviously every child in the group had to play a specific part in the performance, however small, and every child had to show an improved level of involvement at the next performance.

I had to be quick at evaluating and assessing individuals within the group as they performed, and it helped if each child had a moment when they were 'front and centre'.

## **3. Zero Tolerance**

Naturally in the build-up to the twice-yearly performances some children would become quite stressed, and parents would even come to the school to complain that they weren't sleeping or eating well.

I insisted that all children must perform, there were no exceptions. As mentioned earlier, there were some very easy ways for them to do so. If we reached a crisis and they were still refusing then I would allow them to give a private performance to me, or their friends, alone during a break time – and then tell them it was great and I still want them to perform in front of the class.

The fact is that I saw *so* many success stories. Sometimes in class time when it came to a particular child's turn they would cry. I would send them to wash room to wash their face and return, and then insist that they go ahead and perform. *Every* single child that cried and then performed said afterwards: "Can I do it again?" Why? It gave them such a sense of being powerful, instead of weak and shy and powerless.

## **4. Types of Performances**

Over the years as the children progressed through primary school, especially the children that I had taught from the first year onward, the children came up with better and better performances of songs, dances, drama, and instrumental pieces. Children would spend extra time in my classroom during breaks practising hard so that they could then give a performance at a school assembly or a local competition. But the requirements for assessment performance were simple:

- Stand up in front of the class alone or with a partner or group
- Introduce yourself on the microphone
- Sing, or lip-sync (pretend to sing to a background song), or dance, or tell a story/joke, or do a skit/play, or use a puppet ... anything really.

## **5. Audience Participation**

Generally there was no problem with student behaviour in my classes. However, if the students were getting restless because there were a lot of performances and they were going slowly, I would

give them an evaluation task, with a rubric they could fill in about each group or performer. It was very important to make sure this was an opportunity for them to make positive and constructive evaluation and nothing derogatory.

### Assessment Rubric

I would consider it unfair to try to assess students in something that has not been taught and/or practiced. This was not like the 'X Factor' where I was looking for perfectly in-tune singing. After all, the students were all at different levels, and all I really wanted was for them to show improvement since last time (which is called 'ipsative' assessment).

What I was trying to find out:

- Whether my teaching has been effective (if everyone 'fails' I should teach it again)
- Which of the children may be having difficulties and need help
- Which of the children have made good progress

If we had been having lessons about training your voice to sing 'in tune', then tunefulness would be a factor in the assessment – but again only in terms of whether they were improving.

Here is an example of a *possible* rubric:

Name	Class			Date
	Amazing!	Good	disappointing	Needs help
Preparation – evidence of planning				
Group cooperation				
Voice – acceptable volume and pitch				
Movement – expressive, in time				
Rhythm/Beat awareness				
Aware of Audience				
Attitude				
Comment				

There could be more, or less, or more specific points. With younger students there would also be fewer points. With one sheet per child and the names filled in ahead of time it was simply a matter of ticking boxes in the 5-10 minutes as the children perform. Once the marks were entered into my database, then the forms were included in the child's portfolio, along with photos, or children's drawings of the performance as their own response to the performance. With two assessments per year it was obvious in the portfolio how the child was progressing.

### Conclusion

By watching each and every student give some kind of performance twice a year, I was able to be fully aware of their abilities and progress throughout their primary school education. A record of their progress could be clearly seen in their Arts portfolio.

The following article talks about the educational background and purpose of Portfolios.

***Read it and discuss the questions below.***

### **Portfolios: Assessment in Language Arts. ERIC Digest.**

Portfolios are used in various professions to gather typical or exemplary samples of performance. Stockbrokers talk about a client's portfolio; art students assemble a portfolio for an art class or a job interview; people in advertising, publishing, or sales carry portfolios to business meetings. The general purpose is to collect and display an array of materials that has been gathered or produced (Farr, 1990; Olson, 1991).

The portfolios, if defined as collections of work stored in folders over a period of time, will have little value either to students or teachers. To be of use, careful consideration needs to be given to what goes into a portfolio, the process of selection, and how the information is to be used (Krest, 1990; Valencia, 1990). If this is not done, then the portfolio may become little more than a resource file.

### **Portfolios Serve Multiple Purposes**

Many approaches have been suggested for developing language arts portfolios. The one common element in all of the approaches is that portfolios are places to collect samples of a student's work. Whether these samples include typical or best work, whether they include reading and writing, and whether traditional assessments are added to the portfolios are all issues that need to be carefully considered. Other concerns have to do with the assessment of the materials that are collected, the ownership of the portfolios, and whether portfolios are used for both product and product assessment (Farr, 1990; Johns, 1990; Olson, 1991).

To serve the function of assessment, the language arts portfolio should be a record of a student's literacy development - a kind of window on the skills and strategies the student uses in reading and writing. A student's portfolio should be the basis for the teacher's constructive feedback. When portfolios are developed over an extended time period as an integral part of classroom instruction, they become valuable assets for planning both within the classroom and on a school-wide basis. When information is gathered consistently, the teacher is able to construct an organized, ongoing, and descriptive picture of the learning that is taking place. The portfolio draws on the everyday experiences of the students and reflects the reading and writing that a student has done in a variety of literacy contexts (Valencia, et al, 1990).

The best guides for selecting work to include in a language arts portfolio are these: What does this literacy activity tell me about this student as a reader and a writer? Will this information add to what is already known? How does this information demonstrate change?

Portfolio collections can form the foundation for teacher-student conferences, a vital component of portfolio assessment. A conference is an interaction between the teacher and the student, and it is through conferences that the students gain insights into how they operate as readers and writers. Conferences support learners in taking risks with, and responsibility for, their learning. Through conferencing, students are encouraged to share what they know and understand about the processes of reading and writing. It is also a time for them to reflect on their participation in literacy

tasks. Portfolio assessment is an appropriate means of recognizing the connection between reading and writing.

### **Portfolios Address Language Arts Goals**

The use of portfolios for assessment is not a new concept. However, the idea has gained momentum as curriculum experts have called for assessments that include a variety of work samples and have asked that teachers confer with each student about his/her literacy development.

In the last few years, both the goals and instructional approaches to language arts have changed. New curriculum designs advocate instructional approaches that place an emphasis on:

- an integration of all aspects of language arts including reading, writing, listening, and speaking;
- a focus on the processes of constructing meaning;
- the use of literature that inspires and motivates readers;
- an emphasis on problem solving and higher-order thinking skills; and
- the use of collaboration and group work as an essential component of learning.

For example, integrated language arts instruction is now the accepted model in many schools in the country (Cal. Dept. of Education, 1987). Integrated language arts instruction for most of these schools means that there are no longer separate reading and language arts instructional periods--and often that language skills are also taught when students are learning science and social studies.

Integration also means that reading and writing are not broken into separate objectives to be taught, practiced, and mastered one at a time. Rather, it means that skills are taught as they are needed as part of a total behaviour. Discussion preceding the reading of a selection helps to bring a reader's knowledge to bear on what he/she is about to read. At the same time the verbal exchange of ideas fosters speaking and listening skills. Despite the discussions of the importance of integrating all aspects of language arts instruction, it is the teaching of reading and writing that has produced the most obvious integration. Thus, a portfolio containing integrated reading and writing work samples provides a valuable assessment tool.

### **Portfolios as Authentic Assessments**

One of the key issues in the development of portfolios concerns the kinds of structured assessment activities that should be included in them. Many curriculum and assessment specialists have been calling for the development of performance or authentic assessments (Stiggins, 1987; Wiggins, 1989). Performance assessments have been developed and used in the business world and in various professions for some time. Performance assessment is nothing more than the development of an activity that actually represents the task to be performed on the job--or the total behaviour that is the goal of instruction.

Language arts portfolio assessments should:

- **Have value to both teachers and students beyond the assessment information provided by the test.**

The tests should be so much like good instruction that a teacher would want to administer the test for its instructional value even if there was no assessment information provided. Value beyond assessment means tests will take no instructional time since the test is good instruction.

- **Require students to construct responses rather than merely recognizing correct answers.**

Perhaps the greatest concern with multiple-choice tests is that students are not required to develop responses. Rather, they merely have to select an answer choice from several that have already been constructed for them. Educators have long recognized that it is a far different matter to write a complete sentence with correct punctuation than it is to answer a question that asks which of four punctuation marks should be placed at the end of a sentence.

- **Require students to apply their knowledge.**

Many tests provide students with a structure for the expected answers. Performance assessment is open-ended and allows students to apply their knowledge. Student responses to performance assessment should reveal ability to understand a problem and apply his/her knowledge and skills. This means, of course, that a variety of responses will be acceptable.

- **Pose problems for students for which they have to use multiple resources.**

The solution to real problems necessitates the use of multiple resources. The writing of a report, for example, is based on the use of various source materials, reference aids, and the writer's background knowledge. Assessments which attempt to replicate those situations will provide information about students' abilities to use multiple sources. Such assessments should also determine if students are able to select pertinent information from the available resources and put the selected information together in a way that solves the problem posed by the assessment.

- **Present students with tasks that have a realistic focus.**

Tests should look like the tasks that students have to perform in every-day life and should focus on developing responses to realistic situations. Tests often ask only for right answers. Even when tests ask for written responses, the questions posed are "teacher-type questions" that have as their goal an assessment as to whether students have a basic understanding of a story (e.g., main events, compare and contrast). A question with a more realistic focus might ask students to write a letter to a story character suggesting how that character might deal with a problem. This presents a realistic focus to which a student can respond, and the responses will reveal how the student has understood the materials on which the response is based.

Taken together, the general attributes of performance assessment and the specific goals of portfolios represent an integrated approach for language arts assessment. Since the contents of the portfolio are generated by the student, may be typical or exemplary examples, and require continuous evaluation of reading and writing, students are actively engaged in their own growth and development as language users.

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(Farr, 1991)

### Questions about 'Portfolios: assessment in Language Arts'

1. What needs to happen to make portfolios useful? .....

.....

2. What is the one common element in approaches to Language Arts portfolios? .....

.....

3. What three issues need to be carefully considered? Whether the sample include:

- .....
- .....
- .....

4. What is the teacher able to do "when information is gathered consistently"?

.....

5. What are "the best guides for selecting work to include in a language arts portfolio"?

.....

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6. What is "a vital component of portfolio assessment"? .....

7. What emphases in instructional approaches are advocated by new curriculum designs?

- .....



- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

8. Complete this statement:

“Performance assessment is nothing more than .....

.....

9. What five things should be true about a Language Arts portfolio assessments?

Language Arts portfolio assessments should:

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

10. How are “students are actively engaged in their own growth and development as language users”?

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## Assessment through storytelling (or writing)

Getting children to retell a story, or create their own (maybe similar or related) story will give the teacher a fair idea of whether the children

- enjoyed the story (aesthetic)
- understood the language / plot / content of the story they have been told (efferent)

Children love stories. They love being told stories – stories read aloud to them and (even better) stories told aloud. ***So making up stories comes fairly naturally to children.*** Children are already creating stories in their heads.

The problem arises with:

- Language – having sufficient vocab and language structure to tell the story in an understandable form.
- Thinking skills and problem-solving ability to logically sequence the story in telling it.
- Limited writing skills to produce their story in written form.
- Shyness/fear about speaking aloud in front of others.
- Insufficient suitable practice time because of listeners (especially adults) getting bored with them and telling them to be quiet and/or to stop 'lying'.

As part of our storytelling – and language teaching – we need to encourage and assist children to become storytellers. Amongst other things, this will make it easier to assess their progress both by an aural/oral test such as Performance, and by getting them to create something to include in their portfolio.

### ***Assessing Children as Storytellers***

The teacher can encourage the children to *respond* to stories in a *variety* of ways so that they can visualize and experience the story, and to improve their language, sequencing, social awareness (listening and allowing others to listen).

Remember also that 'responding' to stories is one of the learning standards.

Ask them to:

- Create art work related to the story – including creating puppets to show particular characters.
- Dramatize all or part of the story
- Join in with rhymes and chants in the story
- Suggest variations or different endings to the story
- Retell the story
- Use puppets in the dramatization and/or telling of the story

Stimulate their imagination with ideas and suggestions. Notice the worthwhile parts of stories created by them, even if they only make a start (rather than picking up on errors) and provide encouragement and genuine constructive criticism.

**Firstly teach them to tell stories orally and avoid the difficulties involved in writing.** Their stories can be recorded in video form and they can create pictures to show their story sequence. Once they have the story well established and organised, then they can work on the written form.

### ***Activities to assist children as storytellers***

Here are some activities that are designed to help children develop their storytelling skills. Participating will both assist trainee teachers to improve their own storytelling skills, and provide them with strategies to use in the classroom.

Some of the ideas for these activities were taken from “Storytelling!” (Codell, 2012), “Storytelling in the Early Years” (Mynard, 2005), “Teacher’s Guide: Teaching Storytelling” (Storytelling Arts of Indiana, 2012), and “Early Years Starter Pack” (Ferguson, 2007). These are all available on the Internet, and are listed in the Bibliography. (Go look them up!)

## **1. Story Sequence**

Firstly the student storytellers need to know the story sequence really well. We don’t want to necessarily memorise the story, but we need to remember what happened in exactly the right order. It sounds really simple, but for children this is a very important skill.

### *Activity*

On index cards, ask the children to draw simple pictures (stick figures) to indicate the stages of their story. Lay them out in order like a “Story Map”.

- Do not write words!
- Do not write numbers!

They should have about 6 pictures. If they have more than 10 then either their story is too long, or they are being too detailed about the stages of their story.

The first time you do this activity with the children, they could do it about a story they have already heard and know – so essentially this is a **retell** activity.

NOW let them take their 6-10 cards in a stack and throw them up into the air! Then they gather them together, and see if they can rearrange them into the correct order. They can do this several times for practice.

Observing the children doing this (with a checklist in your hand) will give you a chance to assess their abilities, and the cards can be included in their portfolio (put in order by them).

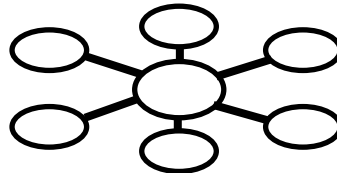
## **2. Character Map**

A good storyteller needs to know the story characters (good and bad) and be able to talk about the freely as if they were friends.

### Activity

Ask the children to draw a character map for each of their characters.

They can start with a circle with the name of the character. Then they add lines, and put a characteristic or trait at the end of each line. When young children are doing this, we are trying to get away from the hassle of writing and spelling at this stage, so it could all be done with pictures.



Again, the character map can be looked at for an assessment (year 3 4.2.1) and then also entered into the portfolio.

### 3. Paired Storytelling

Children should practise their storytelling with a partner first. This does not necessarily mean that one tells and the other listens – that can come at a later stage. At this stage we just want them to tell the story together with each other, not strictly “taking turns”, but both adding parts of the story as they go along.

The teacher can observe the pairs, and take notes on a checklist. They could also take photos (and enter them into the portfolio) or video of the children working in pairs. The paired storytelling could be private with each pair working at the same time and ignoring the others, or it could become a paired performance (for assessment).

### 4. Character Voices

This is an easy activity to help your students practise using different character voices – without having to think of the words to say. Speaking with (interesting and) correct intonation is one of the learning standards for Language Arts. Teacher can observe and keep a checklist.

#### Activity – count to 10

Working with a partner, children take it in turns to try saying the numbers 1 to 10 in each of these different styles. (Can you think of any others - ?)

1. As an angry parent (or teacher?) – telling a child to obey right now.
2. As a young child learning to count – maybe making mistakes and repeating and correcting.
3. It's their party and they have a disappointing number of presents, count them.
4. They are the referee in a boxing match. One man is down, count him out.
5. It is a bad phone connection and they are trying to give someone their phone number (which is 1234 5678 9 10)
6. They are counting their coins that they have been saving up in their money-box.

## 5. Circle Stories

'Circle time' is a great opportunity to share stories and snippets of stories in a non-threatening environment. There are a great many storytelling type games you can play such as "The Emperor's Cat" where each child repeats what the previous one says and adds a line.

### *Activity – circle story*

Choose a story the students know (because you have told them) and divide it into 6-10 parts. Students sit in a circle (on a mat or on chairs), and each in turn around the circle tells one part of the story. After the last part of the story, the next student starts the story again. If the class is very big, there could be several smaller circles – but it is better if everyone gets to listen to everyone else. (You could use a set of story sequence cards to divide up the story.)

Teacher can observe, and keep a checklist.

## 6. Faces

This is another circle activity but this time students practise the storytelling art of showing a face. Again the teacher can observe the students one by one as they have their turn.

### *Activity – Pass the Face*

Students sit in a circle (on a mat, or on chairs) which includes the teacher.

1. The teacher makes a face at the first student. The student copies the face, and turns to show it to everyone in the circle.
2. The student then makes a different face at the second student.
3. The second student then copies the expression and shows everyone.
4. The second student then chooses a different facial expression to show to the third student.

## 7. Actions and Gestures

This is another circle activity for students to practice using actions and gestures.

### *Activity – Catch It*

Students stand in a circle which can include the teacher. (Once the game is underway the teacher can move away and start observing and using a checklist.)

1. The first student (or the teacher) looks as something imaginary in their hands - a spider; a cold, wet, slimy fish; a china teapot; a feather; a dinosaur; a balloon .... etc.
2. They call out another student's name across the circle, and what it is that they are throwing and call "Catch it!" For example: "Faris! An egg! Catch it!"
3. The catcher then thinks of a different object and throws it to someone else.

## 8. Walk the Walk

Children can have a lot of fun practicing walking in different conditions. This encourages them to visualize the situation, and can become an enjoyable part of a storytelling.

### *Activity - walking*

Students have turns at demonstrating walking in different ways:

- walking home from school knowing there are tons of chores waiting
- through heavy sand;
- barefoot from a very sticky and squishy swamp;
- through a blistering hot desert;
- through a scary place at midnight;
- with your right foot in a cast;
- through honey.

### **Storytelling Skill - Eye Contact**

Shy children especially often struggle with maintaining eye contact with those they are not totally comfortable with.

Model eye contact while you are talking to your students. Point out the eye contact you have modelled. Just for fun, stare at each person in the room, have the children do the same.

Tell them they must try to make each listener feel as if the story is being told just for him or her, and eye contact helps the listeners feel that way.

If the storytellers-in-training are too shy for eye contact, they can look at the tops of people's heads, and often the listeners cannot tell the difference.

### **Exercise 1:**

***With your partner or group, invent a fun circle game involving 'eye contact'.***

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.....

***Describe and demonstrate your game to the rest of the class.***

How could observing this game be useful for assessment?

.....

### Storytelling skill – Using Pauses

When we are nervous it's easy to be in a hurry to get through telling a story before we forget it. Children also need to learn not to hurry, and to know the right moments to pause. These are good opportunities to make good use of actions, props, facial gestures and special voices.

#### Exercise 2:

***With your partner or group, invent a fun circle game involving 'pauses'.***

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***Describe and demonstrate your game to the rest of the class.***

How could observing this game be useful for assessment?

.....

## How and where to create portfolios

Teachers can be hampered in their preparations for children's portfolios by decisions about the actual physical format of the portfolios. There are many different options, and teachers choose according to what they (or the school, or the students) can afford, as well as what is practical and efficient.

Many teachers use stationary items such as:

- Display books
- Scrap Books
- Loose leaf folders
- etc.

Some schools have gone digital and use a rewriteable CD, others use online ePortfolios.

Here is one online example to consider and explore.

### OpenSchool ePortfolio

Firstly, (most important!) Pricing:

Full-featured program for one teacher and unlimited students. – Free - Beta version is now available. Register now! - See more at: <http://www.openschooleportfolio.com/pricing/#sthash.d4KuYken.dpuf>

### This is what they say about their website/program:

#### For authentic assessment and project-based learning

Interdisciplinary projects are the best way for students to really show what they know and how they make connections. However, project-based learning does not lend itself to standardized assessment. With our unique project and rubric creator, teachers can create and assess interdisciplinary projects using a standards-based approach or teacher-created criteria. Teachers can draw from a library of portfolio projects and publish their own best lessons for others to use and learn from.

#### For special education and ELL

Standardized assessments are inherently unfair to SPED and ELL students and may reinforce underachievement. OpenSchool ePortfolio lets these students show abilities they have that may not otherwise be measured by current standardized testing procedures. With the growing populations of both of these groups of students, OpenSchool ePortfolio can paint a better, more holistic picture of these students and their progress towards desired educational outcomes.

### Internet Exercise:

- Investigate OpenSchool ePortfolio. Would it be useful in the Malaysian Primary School situation?
- Are there other / better online ePortfolios?
- Are there other ways you could create a digital portfolio for your students/
- Are hard-copy portfolios better, or digital? Why?



## Portfolio assessments

Portfolios are practical ways of assessing student work throughout the entire year. With this method, you can systematically collect descriptive records of a variety of student work over time that reflects growth toward the achievement of specific curricular objectives. Portfolios include information, sample work, and evaluations that serve as indicators for student performance. By documenting student performance over time, portfolios are a better way to crosscheck student progress than just one measure alone. Portfolios can include:

- Samples of written student work, such as stories, completed forms, exercise sheets, and descriptions
- Drawings representing student content knowledge and proficiencies
- Tapes of oral work, such as role-playing, presentations, or an oral account of a trip
- Teacher descriptions of student accomplishments, such as performance on oral tasks
- Formal test data, checklists, and rating sheets

Checklists or summary sheets of tasks and performances in the student's portfolio can help you make instructional decisions and report consistently and reliably. Checklists can also help you collect the same kind of data for each student. In this way you can assess both the progress of one student and of the class as a whole.

In addition, here are a few ways that your ELLs can have an active role in the portfolio process:

- Students can select samples of their work and reflect on their own growth over time.
- You can meet with ELLs to develop their goals and standards.
- Together with students, you can set tangible, realistic improvement goals for future projects.
- Students – as a class, in groups, or individually – can create their own rubrics.

(Colorado, 2007)

## Tasks

Work with a partner or group.

### 1. Discuss and create a set of criteria for portfolio assessment

- rationalize each criterion
- suggest suitable documentation.

### 2. Design aural-oral and written assessment using stories as a resource

- discuss how these resources can be documented in the portfolio

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