Summative Assessment

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What Is the Topic

Summative assessment encompasses the evaluation of students' comprehension, skills, and overall academic performance at the conclusion of a specific learning period. Summative assessments are implemented at the end of a unit, set of units, or entire course to evaluate the extent to which students have achieved learning objectives. The Oregon Statewide Assessment System includes required summative tests in three content areas (general and extended versions of English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science tests), as well as tests of English language proficiency that are required to determine which students are eligible to enter or exit English learner status (English Language Proficiency Assessment). Title III is officially known as the Language Instruction for English Learner and Immigrant Students Act. The purpose of Title III is to help ensure that English learners, including immigrant children and youth who are English learners, attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic achievement and additionally, Title III assists teachers, administrators, and other school leaders in developing and enhancing their capacity to provide effective instructional programs.

In this brief, we focus on equity-centered summative assessment approaches and strategies to support educators and school leaders to ensure fair assessment methods that account for language proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds of English learners. Equitable assessment practices for ELs involve approaches to evaluating their language proficiency and academic progress that are fair, unbiased, and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and needs of these students. These practices include accommodations such as extended time, bilingual dictionaries, or alternative assessment formats to mitigate language barriers and facilitate accurate evaluation (Gilliland & Pella, 2017). Gilliland and Pella (2017) argue that while English learners may have lower scores on standardized tests, other assessments (such as portfolios or first language testing) show that these students have knowledge and skills that are not revealed through the standardized evaluations (Solórzano, 2008). suggesting that a single test cannot capture the wide range of multilingual students' abilities and assets. As such, it is necessary to implement equitable practices in assessment of English learners to ensure that students

receive a comprehensive education that accounts for students' growing levels of English language proficiency and allows access to grade level curriculum.

Artze-Vega et al. (2023) and Montenegro & Jankowski (2020) propose five characteristics of equity-centered summative assessments that can guide educators and school leaders as they develop and implement strategies:

a) Relevance: Assessments are closely aligned with the learning objectives of the instructional period, reflecting the goals, interests, and experiences of students.
b) Authenticity: These assessments offer meaningful opportunities for students to showcase their acquired knowledge and skills by applying course concepts to real-world scenarios, mirroring tasks they may encounter in academic, professional, or personal settings.
c) Rigor: Expectations are set high to engage students in challenging tasks, demonstrating the belief that all students can excel with adequate support. This approach counters the harmful practice of underestimating minoritized students' capabilities.
d) Transparency: Assessment purposes and success criteria are clearly communicated, often through rubrics and sample assignments. Policies regarding grading, technology use, and collaboration are openly discussed.
e) Inclusivity: Assessments are designed to minimize cultural and other biases by utilizing language and examples relevant to diverse student experiences. They avoid jargon and ambiguous language to enhance clarity and understanding. Inclusive assessments offer students options and flexibility in choosing assessment formats that best suit their learning styles.

What Is the Evidence Base

Research indicates that standardized tests may not fully capture the abilities and knowledge of English learners. Alternative assessments, such as portfolios or first language testing, reveal skills not shown in standardized evaluations (Solórzano, 2008). Consequently, equitable assessment practices are essential to provide a comprehensive education that accounts for students' growing English proficiency and access to grade-level curriculum. Studies show that ELs in schools with curricula designed to develop English proficiency outperform peers in less supportive environments, emphasizing the need for reliable and valid assessments tailored to ELs (Abedi, 2006).

The following frameworks and models can be effective in developing and strengthening relationships between schools and EL families:

1. **Funds of Knowledge Approach**

The Funds of Knowledge approach focuses on leveraging the cultural and linguistic knowledge that students bring from their home and community environments into the classroom. This approach emphasizes the integration of students' background knowledge and experiences into assessment practices to make them more equitable and meaningful. This approach is grounded in three principles:

1. Cultural Relevance: Assessments are designed to reflect the cultural backgrounds and experiences of students, making content more relatable and understandable.
2. Community Involvement: Educators engage with students' families and communities to better understand their cultural practices and knowledge, incorporating this understanding into the assessment design.
3. Contextualized Learning: Tasks and assessments are contextualized in real-life scenarios familiar to the students, helping them connect their learning to their personal experiences.

- González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) demonstrated that when teachers use students' cultural and linguistic resources in assessments, students are more likely to engage and perform better because they can draw on familiar contexts. This approach helps in reducing cultural biases and making assessments more inclusive.
- In a study by Schissel et al. (2018), researchers explored how using the funds of knowledge approach encouraged a fuller use of ELs' language resources in classroom-based assessments. The findings showed that using readings in both English and Spanish improved performance compared to English-only readings.
- This study outlines the development of a hybrid instructional framework using mobile-assisted technology and the funds of knowledge approach to support English Learners (ELs) in their writing skills. The framework leverages ELs' everyday experiences as educational assets, guiding learning through five steps: discovering, connecting, writing, sharing, and preserving culture. The assessment methods applied demonstrated that integrating sociocultural factors with technology effectively supports diverse learners, enhancing their writing skills by making learning more relevant and engaging for English learners.

2. Culturally Informed Assessment: This approach draws from culturally responsive education principles (Figure 1) and advocates for integrating students' cultural backgrounds, linguistic diversity, and unique experiences into the evaluation process to provide equitable opportunities for demonstrating knowledge and skills (Montenegro and Jankowski, 2017). A culturally informed approach to assessment fosters equitable classrooms by designing and selecting assessments that promote student equity as part of a balanced system of evaluations. This approach does not aim to evaluate a student's culture or require teachers to be "cultural experts." Instead, it starts with educators reflecting on their own experiences and assumptions to understand their cultural influences, thereby enabling them to create assessments that resonate with students' diverse backgrounds and ensure fair opportunities for all learners. It provides students with flexibility during assessments, allowing them to incorporate their own cultural references and fluencies into demonstrations of achievement.

The following questions can guide when using this approach:

1. In what ways does the assessment make reference to culture?
2. How does the assessment allow students to draw from their cultural fluencies?
3. How does the assessment support students in bridging their social/cultural identities with their academic identities?

- This research sheds light on the barriers experienced by English Language Learners in mathematics assessments, highlighting culturally informed assessment as a critical approach that can help mitigate these barriers (Abedi & Lord, 2001). By recognizing the need to disentangle language skills from mathematical proficiency, the study delved into the complexities of assessing ELs' mathematical knowledge. Through the implementation of an interactive interview protocol, which is inherently more flexible and accommodating of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, findings showed a more comprehensive understanding of students' mathematical abilities. This approach allowed students to showcase their mathematical reasoning and communication skills in ways that traditional written assessments could not fully capture.
- This literature review explores how culturally informed assessment can benefit migrant students and English learners who are migrant students. By examining research on diverse student populations, the review emphasizes the importance of teachers understanding students' cultural communication styles and providing opportunities for language development alongside conceptual learning. Through these insights, the study underscores the role of culturally informed assessment in empowering migrant students and ELs to showcase their knowledge effectively.
- This study offers a set of evidence-based recommendations to guide educators, curriculum developers, and teacher educators in developing their own approaches to supporting mathematical reasoning and sense making for English learners.

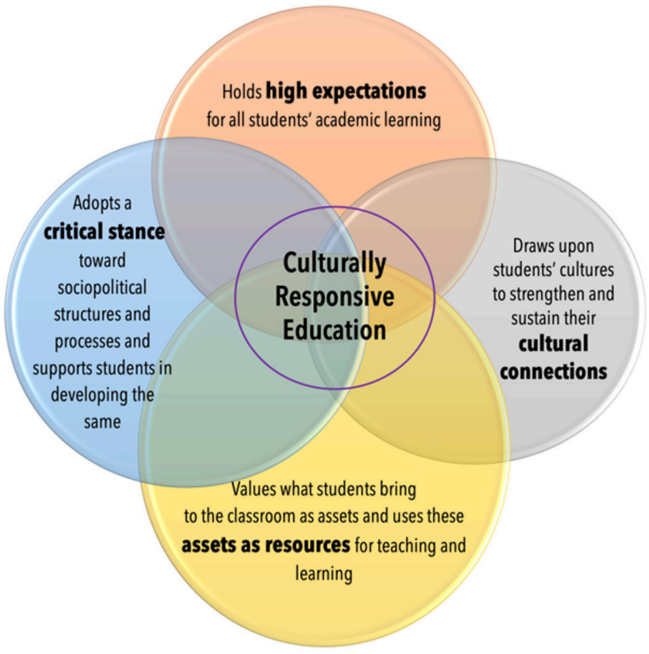

Figure 1. Principles of Culturally Responsive Education

Summary

Review of relevant literature: Theoretical basis	Review of relevant literature: Support of identified research and practice	Empirical evidence on how it serves students and promotes systemic change
Funds of Knowledge: This approach emphasizes the integration of students' background knowledge and experiences into assessment practices to make them more equitable and meaningful.	Assessments are designed to reflect the cultural backgrounds and experiences of students, making content more relatable and understandable. Tasks and assessments are contextualized in real-life scenarios familiar to the students, helping them connect their learning to their personal experiences.	This approach can enhance the validity and reliability of assessments for ELs. González et al. (2005) argue that when teachers use students' cultural and linguistic resources in summative assessments, students are more likely to engage and perform better. This approach contributes to systemic change as it helps in reducing cultural biases and making assessments more inclusive (Keefer et al., 2020)
Culturally Responsive Assessment: For assessments to be culturally responsive they must be able to account for differences in students' cultural identities. This means that they need to be adaptive enough to allow students the opportunity to bring their own cultural references and fluencies into demonstrations of achievement.	It involves selecting assessment tools that are appropriate for ELs, and being intentional in using assessment results to improve learning. This approach doesn't ask educators to evaluate a student's culture. Nor does it demand teachers to become experts in students' cultures (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017).	To be culturally responsive, teaching and assessment practices should be negotiated, aligned with, and included in classroom norms. We suggest that what is typically considered valid and reliable assessment practice may need to be adjusted to account for students' cultural ways of knowing, communicating, and participating within a classroom.

Equity Considerations

Equity considerations are fundamental when crafting summative assessments tailored for ELs. These assessments should go beyond evaluating content knowledge to include an understanding of ELs' unique linguistic needs and cultural backgrounds. Equitable assessment of English learners is a critical factor in their academic success. Gottlieb (2016) argues "if assessment is reliable, valid, and fair from start to finish, then it can serve as the bridge to educational equity" (p. 45). As English learners engage in authentic assessment of language and content with high expectations and high support, they are better able to demonstrate their current level of performance, and educators can obtain a more accurate picture of what students are capable of, rather than only understanding what they are currently unable to do (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017). In terms of equitable grading practices, when we think of equity, we must keep in mind that equal does not mean equitable.

Example from the Field
As educators explore and implement equity-informed assessment strategies, this question can serve as a guide: How do I ensure my assessments are equitable and inclusive for all students, particularly English learners?

While districts and schools may use a single set of criteria by which to grade all students, it does not mean that all assignments are created with access points for all learners (Carlo et al., 2004). If an assessment is designed with equitable access points for all learners, including ELs, determining and assigning grades becomes easier but not without challenges. Even with sufficient access points and linguistic support in place, ELs with growing language proficiency may still generate products of learning that do not demonstrate the same linguistic complexity in English as their more fluent peers. However, we should keep in mind that we cannot penalize students for their growing English proficiency (González et al., 2005).

Considerations for Local Context: Strategy Selection

As we consider the optimal next steps for supporting educators and school leaders to establish equitable summative assessments of English learners, a valuable source of information lies in the local context of the district and/or school. In this brief, by local context, we refer to the specific factors within the community that may impact the development and effectiveness of equitable assessment practices. As stated in the Oregon Department of Education's integrated guidance for student success, the summative assessments should be informed by and collaborated on with communities, as well as inform how communities are being engaged more broadly. Moreover, it is crucial to grasp the significance of standardized summative English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessments which measure and report on students' English language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and comprehension. ELP assessments contribute to the effective education of English learners, who are already subject to various forms of testing.

We recommend reviewing the following resources:

- Oregon's State Assessment System provides equity-centered tools and resources that help inform instructional decisions from the classroom to the state level.
- Educators can use the resources on this page to support local assessment-related professional development efforts.
- Oregon ELA/Literacy Summative Assessment Blueprint.
- State of Oregon Language Use Survey, whose purpose is to help the school determine if students should be screened for English language proficiency. Screening results determine if students are designated as English learners, and provided with English language development services.
- Oregon Department of Education Assessment Training Materials and The Assessment Team.

We encourage educators and school leaders to familiarize themselves with the characteristics of their school communities, districts, and programs offered within their schools, as school districts may offer different resources like programs or other initiatives aimed at fostering equitable assessment practices. For example, consider checking: Bend-La Pine School District, Ashland School District, and Lincoln County School District.

What Can Educators Do: Strategies for Success

Summative assessment can look very different depending on your subject and students. However, one main characteristic highlighted in research is that summative assessments must always have clear expectations and success criteria, both for the person marking them and for the students to aim towards. This website also offers ten different summative assessment examples. The following points can be useful as well:

- **Choose appropriate assessment methods**
  The first step to using summative assessment is to choose the methods that match your learning objectives and your students' needs. For example, if your objective is to develop students' speaking skills, you might use oral presentations, interviews, or podcasts as summative tasks.
- **Communicate the assessment criteria and expectations**
  Provide rubrics, checklists, or samples that explain how you will grade their work and what you expect from them.
- **Provide feedback and opportunities for improvement**
  Give your students timely and specific feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, as well as suggestions for improvement. Also provide opportunities for your students to revise, resubmit, or redo their summative tasks based on your feedback.
- **Use assessment data to inform your teaching**
  Analyze the results of your summative assessment and identify the areas of improvement for your students and yourself. You should also use the assessment data to adjust your curriculum, instruction, and support strategies to meet your students' needs.

- **Celebrate and reward your students' achievements**
  Acknowledge and appreciate the efforts and progress of your students, as well as their outcomes. You can also celebrate and reward your students' achievements by displaying their work, giving certificates or badges, or organizing a showcase or a party.
- **Involve your students in the assessment process**
  Invite your students to participate in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the summative assessment. For example, you might ask your students to co-create the assessment criteria, self-assess or peer-assess their work, or provide feedback to you and their classmates.

The following questions can serve as a guide as educators and school leaders explore and implement strategies to foster more equitable summative assessments:

1. How can we effectively assess English language learners' knowledge rather than their fluency in English?
2. For the content assessments that are not measures of English proficiency, does English proficiency interfere with proper measurement of the knowledge and skills tested?
3. Do the scores provide useful information that will improve instruction for ELs?
4. When ELs' scores are aggregated for accountability purposes, are those aggregates useful for evaluating effective instruction for ELs?
5. When accommodations (e.g., extended time, dictionaries/translators, word to word bilingual dictionaries.) are provided for ELs do they result in more accurate measurement of their knowledge and skills?

The strategies below serve as examples of potential options rather than a definitive set of recommendations. Suitable approaches could support and key in on various factors associated with the school or district, such as the level of engagement the district already has with families of ELs and what programs or initiatives are already in place. The resources below can provide educators with a better understanding of how to identify, adapt, and implement strategies according to the demographics and backgrounds of their families and students.

Strategy 1: Performance Portfolios (p.13)
Primary audience: educators and students
Description: These are a collection of student work samples, such as written work, graphic representations, audio recordings, videos, self-evaluations, and goal statements, that reflect student progress. These portfolios serve both formative and summative functions, allowing for continuous improvement and providing a comprehensive summary of what students know, understand, and can do. By incorporating a wide range of evidence, portfolios ensure that diverse learning styles and strengths are recognized, promoting equity in assessment and giving all students the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in multiple ways (Bailey & Durán, 2020).
How to use it?
To effectively implement Performance Assessment Portfolios, follow these steps:

- Collect: Guide students to select work samples that meet specific criteria reflecting curricular outcomes. Ensure that the selected pieces showcase a variety of skills and knowledge areas, and represent the student's best work.
- Organize: Plan and structure the portfolio to include diverse items such as written assignments, graphic representations, audio recordings, videos, self-evaluations, and goal statements. This organization should reflect the student's learning process, products, growth, and achievements, giving a comprehensive view of their progress.
- Evaluate: Use scoring guides, rubrics, or other criteria to assess the portfolio collaboratively with students. Provide structured feedback based on these evaluations to help students understand their strengths and areas for improvement.
- Reflect: Include opportunities for students to engage in self-assessment and reflective practices. Encourage them to document their learning experiences and articulate their progress and future goals.
- Share: Present the portfolios to parents or caregivers to communicate student progress. This sharing fosters a supportive home environment and allows parents to be actively involved in their child's education.

How is it beneficial? Who benefits from it?

This strategy benefits students by helping them develop a clearer understanding of their learning progress, fostering a positive self-concept as learners, and providing specific guidance for future learning. This approach allows students to take ownership of their learning, encouraging self-reflection and goal-setting. Teachers benefit by gaining comprehensive insight into student learning and achievement, which enables them to tailor their instruction more effectively to meet individual student needs. Parents and caregivers also benefit by receiving detailed and understandable information about their child's progress and achievements, which helps them support their child's learning at home (Black et al., 2011).

How does it support changes in the systems?

This strategy can support educators to ensure that assessments are inclusive and representative of all students' abilities, fostering an educational environment that values and supports the diversity of English learners. By accommodating diverse learning styles and providing a more personalized assessment approach, portfolios promote educational equity, ensuring all students have the opportunity to showcase their skills and progress.

Known or potential cautions? What not to do?

One key caution is the overemphasis on the quantity of artifacts included in the portfolio. It is essential to focus on the quality and relevance of the work samples to ensure that the portfolio effectively reflects the student's learning and achievements. Another caution is neglecting the criteria for selecting work samples; it is crucial to align all selected work with specific curricular goals and standards to maintain the portfolio's effectiveness. Inconsistent evaluation is another potential issue; using clear and consistent rubrics or scoring guides is essential to ensure fairness and accuracy in the assessment (Andrade, 2005).

Strategy 2: Double Scale of Criteria

Primary audience: educators

Description: Drawing from culturally responsive classroom assessment, the double scale criteria strategy proposed by Duverger (2005), involves implementing two sets of criteria in summative assessments: one focusing on content proficiency and the other on language proficiency. By separating language skills, such as vocabulary, comprehension, phonology, grammar, and meaning, from content skills, educators can ensure a more accurate evaluation of English learners' knowledge and abilities. This strategy allows educators to disentangle the effects of language proficiency on content understanding, providing a clearer picture of student achievement. This strategy can support educators in ensuring fair assessment, as this encourages educators to separate language skills from content skills. This is a helpful strategy as it allows the teacher to create a rubric to easily identify the language skills during and after assessment.

How to use this strategy?

Follow these steps to effectively use the double scale of criteria strategy:

- Identify content and language skills: Determine the specific content knowledge and language skills assessed in the summative assessment.
- Develop separate criteria: Create two sets of criteria—one for assessing content proficiency and another for evaluating language proficiency. These criteria should align with the learning objectives and standards for both content and language acquisition.
- Apply the criteria: Use the established criteria to evaluate students' performance on the assessment. Assess language skills independently of content understanding to ensure a fair and accurate evaluation of English learners' abilities.

How is it beneficial? Who benefits from it?

This strategy benefits both educators and English learners by providing a more equitable and accurate assessment process. Educators benefit from a clearer understanding of students' strengths and areas for improvement in both content and language skills. English learners benefit from a fair evaluation that separates language proficiency from content knowledge, allowing them to demonstrate their understanding without language barriers hindering their performance. Additionally, this strategy promotes transparency and accountability in assessment practices, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students.

How does it support changes in the educational systems?

Implementing the Double Scale of Criteria supports systemic changes by promoting fairness and equity in summative assessment practices for English learners. By acknowledging the influence of language proficiency on content understanding and incorporating separate criteria for assessment, this strategy challenges traditional assessment approaches that may disadvantage English learners. It aligns with equity-centered summative assessment practices by addressing the linguistic diversity of the student population and ensuring that assessments accurately measure both content and language proficiency.

What are some known or potential cautions?

When utilizing the Double Scale of Criteria, it is essential to ensure that the criteria for assessing language proficiency are aligned with language acquisition standards and do not inadvertently introduce bias. Additionally, educators should avoid using language proficiency as a sole determinant of content

understanding and should consider contextual factors that may impact students' performance. It is crucial to maintain consistency and objectivity in applying the criteria and to provide appropriate support and accommodations for English learners as needed. Finally, educators should guard against reducing students' content expectations based solely on language proficiency levels and should maintain high academic standards for all students.

Implementation Considerations

The Oregon Department of Education offers an integrated needs assessment (p.27), which examines practices, the health of current systems and program quality. It is informed by community input and yields the best results when honest reflective discussion considering multiple viewpoints are included as part of the process. As discussed throughout this brief, ensuring equitable assessment practices can have a positive impact on the academic success of all students, including English learners.
As school leaders and educators develop and implement summative assessment strategies, we recommend reflecting on the following questions (Abedi, 2001; Gottlieb, 2016; Montenegro & Jankowski,2020):

1. How many different approaches to assessment are viable and realistic to accommodate the diverse needs of English learners? How can we ensure that these approaches are equitable and accessible to all students, regardless of their language proficiency or cultural background?
2. What specific goals do we aim to achieve through our assessment practices? How can we ensure that these goals are inclusive and consider the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of English learners?
3. How can we develop assessment practices that not only measure academic proficiency but also offer English learners meaningful opportunities to demonstrate their learning, progress, skills, and understandings in ways that respect their cultural and linguistic diversity?
4. How can assessments be designed to empower English learners, fostering their growth and development rather than merely measuring their deficits or limitations?

As we embark on creating a plan and proceeding with implementation, it is useful to consider topic-specific aspects as well as general factors and guiding questions that can increase the likelihood for successful implementation.

Local Context

- How does the local context influence the implementation of equitable summative assessment practices, considering factors like transportation, time constraints, family involvement, and the sociopolitical environment of the community?
- To what extent is the implementation plan sensitive to the unique local challenges and opportunities in promoting equitable summative assessment practices?
    - What measures are in place to ensure the sustainability of the plan over time within schools and across the district?

- How consistent is the implementation of the plan—both within individual schools and across the entire district?

Consider as well:

- Geographical Factors:How do the location and size of the district/school impact the practical aspects of plan implementation?
- Learning Mode: What considerations are needed based on the learning mode (in person/remote/hybrid/other) prevalent in the local context?
- Duration: How long is the plan designed to last, and what measures are in place for its continuous effectiveness?
- Reliability: Is the implementation plan reliable and realistic given the local context, and what factors contribute to its sustainability?

Implementation Plan and Process

The following questions can further enhance clarity and provide practical guidance for educators and school leaders as they navigate the implementation process and monitor progress effectively:

- **What is our capacity for implementation?**

Understanding our proficiency in assessing language skills, familiarity with cultural considerations, and access to appropriate resources and training is crucial. Professional development programs and workshops focused on language assessment techniques and cultural competence can enhance educators' capacity to effectively assess ELs' language proficiency and academic progress. These initiatives help educators build a robust foundation in cultural responsiveness and effective assessment strategies, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet the diverse needs of ELs (Morita-Mullaney et al., 2019).

- **How are families involved in the implementation of the plan?**

Educators can engage families through communication channels, workshops, and culturally sensitive approaches to ensure their input is valued and incorporated into assessment strategies. By actively involving families, schools can create a supportive network that enhances the educational experience for ELs and provides insights into cultural nuances that may impact learning (Andrade, 2005).

- **How will we know if the implementation is successful?**

Educators and school leaders can monitor progress through formative assessments, observation of student participation, and feedback from students, families, and colleagues. Regularly collecting and analyzing this data helps educators adjust their strategies to better support ELs. Success indicators may include improved language proficiency, higher academic achievement, and positive feedback from the school community, demonstrating that the assessment practices are effectively addressing the needs of ELs (Morita-Mullaney et al., 2019).

- **What resources do we need to implement the program, plan, or strategies?**

During the implementation phase, various costs may arise, including expenses for additional professional development, materials, and administrative support (Lara-Alecio et al., 2010). Understanding these financial implications is crucial for effective resource allocation and program sustainability. These resources may include funding for interpreters, culturally relevant materials,

professional development for staff, and outreach efforts to engage families. Research by Henderson and Mapp (2002) emphasizes the importance of allocating sufficient resources and support for family involvement initiatives to ensure their effectiveness. While funding may not always be readily available within school budgets, educators and school leaders can explore external funding opportunities. For instance, Oregon's Department of Education offers grants and funding opportunities, and organizations like the Spencer Foundation may provide additional financial support. Additionally, fostering financial stewardship and involving District Equity Committees in the budgeting process can help prioritize resources based on student and community needs. The Oregon Department of Education's Guideline to spending funds responsibly can also be considered or reviewed

- **Are accessibility supports in place?**

Ensuring that accessibility supports are in place is crucial for equitable assessment practices with English Learners (ELs). These supports can include accommodations for varying levels of language proficiency, such as providing extra time on tests, offering word to word dictionaries, or translating instructions into students' native languages. Additionally, using culturally relevant assessment materials can help bridge the gap between students' cultural backgrounds and the assessment content. Educators should regularly review and update these supports to ensure they meet the evolving needs of their students. Professional development for educators on how to implement and utilize these supports effectively is also essential to maintaining an inclusive and supportive learning environment (Abedi, 2006).

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