

Samples of Student Oral and Written Production Based on the CEFR Levels

Viewer's Guide



INTRODUCTION

This viewing guide provides background information on the project, related research, and suggestions for reflection to enrich the professional learning experience of educators.

It was developed to support elementary and secondary FSL educators involved in Core French, Extended French and French Immersion programs in their ongoing work to strengthen student proficiency in French. It provides opportunities to explore and discuss:

- models of oral and written tasks that reflect the action-oriented approach
- samples of oral and written student productions that have been assessed according to international standards
- specific terminology relevant to language proficiency
- highlights of a moderated marking process for FSL educators
- progression of proficiency in French

FSL educators are encouraged to consider how ideas presented in this resource contribute to enhancing student proficiency in French, while

The Framework seeks to provide a point of reference, not a practical assessment tool.

Council of Europe (2001), CEFR, p. 178

continuing to follow Ontario's assessment and evaluation policies as described in *Growing Success*. In addition to being able to examine samples of student oral and written production, educators

will have the opportunity to discover insights gleaned by educators involved in the process.

It is important to note that the project provides examples that demonstrate French proficiency at a point in time. This approach differs from the assessment of curriculum content for evaluation and reporting on student achievement, which is guided by *Growing Success*. Of course, planning for proficiency development starts with the curriculum.

Viewers of this resource may also be interested in *CEFR-inspired Classroom Practices* (available at www.curriculum.org) focusing specifically on planning, teaching and assessing using the Ontario FSL curriculum and the achievement chart.

DEVELOPING COMMON UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT PROFICIENCY IN FSL

Participation in professional learning communities with colleagues at one school or across a school district – including both elementary and secondary schools – is beneficial in fostering a common understanding of teaching and assessment practices in FSL.

Participation in teacher moderation is “one of the most powerful research-based strategies for linking assessment to improved instructional practice.”

*Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (2007),
Teacher Moderation, p. 1*

that strengthen student proficiency in French.

Educators should take the opportunity to view all video segments in the series, as well as

going deeper in each of the levels, with an eye to the progression of proficiency in French from basic to independent, based on the

Before viewing the video segments, FSL educator teams may wish to reflect on and discuss teaching and assessment practices

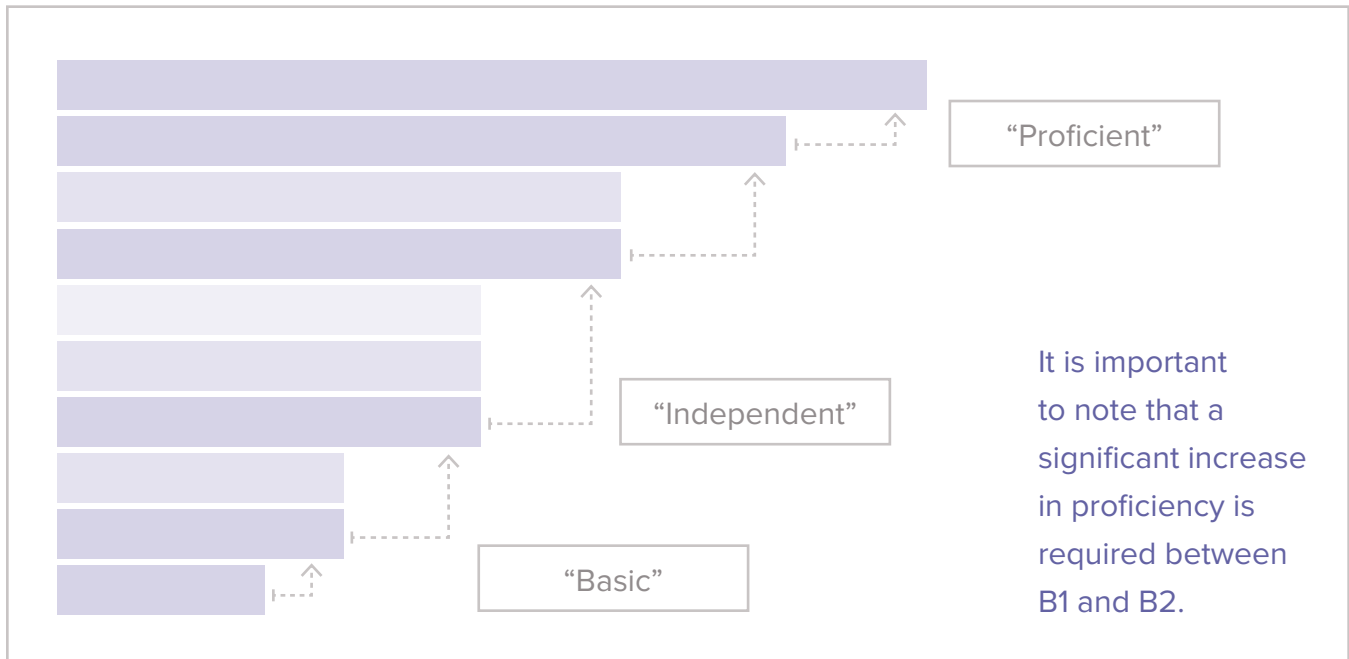
CEFR, as evidenced in the oral and written production samples and accompanying assessment comments.

LEARNER PROGRESS ACROSS THE PROFICIENCY CONTINUUM

The *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) provides a comprehensive overview of competencies that French language learners need to develop in order to communicate and interact effectively.

The CEFR (p. 33) presents three broad levels of language proficiency (A, B, and C) that aim to:

- encompass learners at all stages from introductory to highly proficient
- apply to second-language learners from school age to adult
- describe the progression in development of second language proficiency in each sub-level: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2



The CEFR can be used to inform ways to track student proficiency in FSL across the proficiency continuum. As students progress, teachers help them develop fluency and accuracy through:

FSL students may find this project helpful to inform goal setting and self-assessment to improve their French skills.

- meaningful activities that build vocabulary
- teaching language conventions in context to support precise communication
- ensuring errors do not become fossilized
- drawing attention to anglicisms and other evidence of inaccurate language use
- providing students with strategies to avoid using English when they lack precise vocabulary to express ideas

- explicit teaching of, and opportunities to practise, idiomatic expressions in context
- explicit teaching of, and opportunities to apply, sociolinguistic skills

The authors of the CEFR encourage reflection on questions (p. xii) such as:

- What will students likely need to do with the language now or in the future?
- What do they need to learn in order to be able to use the language to achieve those communicative needs?
- What motivates students to learn?

Although levels C1 and C2 are not part of this project, educators may find it beneficial to become familiar with these in order to appreciate the full scope of progression of proficiency.

THE CEFR IN THE ONTARIO CONTEXT

In Ontario, a number of initiatives have used the CEFR to inform teaching and assessment practices in FSL that promote the development of proficiency, including:

- the action-oriented approach
- tasks that are relevant to students' lives, and possible real-life situations which prepare students to become social actors
- functional language use
- spontaneous oral interaction for meaningful communication
- developing proficiency in all competences: oral interaction and production, written interaction and production, listening comprehension, reading comprehension
- formulation of criteria to describe in positive terms what students can do
- encouraging students to become risk takers by considering errors a part of the learning process as they continually seek to refine their skills
- providing specific feedback related to language proficiency
- developing metacognitive skills related to second-language learning and use
- developing student proficiency through the refinement of communicative language competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic)
- developing learner autonomy through self-assessment and building a repertoire of strategies that enable students to become self-sufficient, lifelong language learners
- cultivating an appreciation of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, with particular emphasis on heightening awareness of the value of learning FSL

In Ontario, assessment and evaluation are based on the policies and practices described in *Growing Success*. FSL teachers use curriculum policy documents and the achievement chart to plan, teach and assess. The CEFR is a professional resource that may inform practice and support student proficiency in French. The CEFR invites educators to reflect on a multitude of factors related to second-language learning.

It is important to note that the CEFR levels:

- do not measure student achievement of curriculum expectations
- do not correlate to levels of achievement in Ontario's achievement chart
- do not correspond to a specific FSL program or grade level

TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT ARE INTERCONNECTED

FSL educators consider the following as they link assessment and teaching in their daily practice.

Key Concepts	Considerations for Daily Practice
Opportunities for Applying Knowledge and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students need opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in oral production, written production, aural comprehension and reading comprehension in relevant situations that focus on a communicative goal.
The Role of Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction plays a central role in oral and written communication, and therefore, learning and assessment tasks should provide opportunities for students to practise and demonstrate skills in interactive communication, both oral and written. When interacting orally, students should be encouraged to respond appropriately and to defend their point of view. • Interaction must also occur between students and the teacher in order to provide role modelling and to provide opportunities for individual support and assessment.
A Positive Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the early stages of developing language proficiency, successful communication or comprehension of the intended message is valued, even though inaccuracies in second language may be evident. • When teaching and assessing FSL students, it is important to refrain from comparing them to French first-language speakers. • Students' efforts to use complex language are commended. They are not penalized for incorrect use of structures that have not been taught.

Key Concepts	Considerations for Daily Practice
Increasing Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As students progress, their use of language conventions is refined to improve accuracy and precision. • From a CEFR perspective, proficiency and accuracy increase significantly between levels B1 and B2, as students progress from understanding and communicating familiar ideas to understanding and articulating complex and detailed ideas on a range of subjects. • Positively worded statements related to specific aspects of proficiency can be used for self-assessment and as a basis for feedback to help students recognize their strengths and develop confidence as language learners. • As rich and precise language contributes to accurate expression and comprehension, teachers strive to continually broaden students' vocabulary. • Explicit teaching is required to help students develop proficiency in oral and written comprehension, production and interaction. • Explicit teaching of learner autonomy and metacognition is beneficial in helping students apply strategies appropriately to improve their learning and communication, as well as to monitor progress and set goals.
Fostering Critical Thinking Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking skills are cultivated and practised so that students are able to present logical, well-organized written and oral productions, in which the theme is fully developed, multiple perspectives are considered, pros and cons are presented, and opinions are supported with facts and experiences.

VIDEO PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This video project involved collaboration with four school boards representing different regions of Ontario, and with the Centre international d'études pédagogiques (CIEP) in France, the public establishment of the French Ministry of National Education responsible for, among other things, the promotion of the French language abroad and assessment and certification in French. The CIEP provided the assessment tasks for this project and played a key role in reviewing all comments and scores to ensure alignment with the internationally recognized standards of the Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELFF).

The DELF provides official certification of French proficiency for learners of French as a second language based on the CEFR levels A1, A2, B1, and B2.

Students in Core French, Extended French and French Immersion programs volunteered to participate in this project by completing the oral and written production components of the DELF. Some Ontario educators who have received training as DELF formateurs (trainers) volunteered to administer the oral or written components and participate in the moderated marking session.

While this resource does present an opportunity to discuss CEFR levels, it is primarily focused on supporting professional learning to strengthen student proficiency in FSL.

The DELF has 4 components: listening comprehension, reading comprehension, written production, and oral production

PROJECT OBSERVATIONS: ESTABLISHING CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Students who volunteered for this project represented different stages of developing proficiency. The nature of the tasks, the descriptors of proficiency, and the comments on student performance validated by CIEP

are all reminders that as students progress in their development of French language proficiency, various aspects of teaching evolve in response to their changing needs and abilities.

Educators noted that students in the early stages of developing proficiency in French were aware of their limitations in French, and reflected on the importance of valuing what students could do.

Because all written and oral instructions were in French, it was important to verify student comprehension. The benefits of providing ample opportunities in class for students to develop a solid understanding of vocabulary related to different types of instructions were evident.

Depending on the level, the tasks required students to demonstrate ability to interact in a variety of situations, write for functional purposes, or develop an argument orally and in writing, supporting a point of view with substantial arguments. Teachers considered the implications for classroom practice related to these skills and the development of proficiency in French.

Teachers provided opportunities for students to practise and demonstrate the following skills:

- oral interaction in a variety of situations
- writing for functional purposes
- developing an argument orally and in writing
- speaking to summarize or to take a stance
- supporting a point of view with substantial arguments

Oral Production

When interacting with students, teachers kept in mind the level of proficiency in French that students had attained, and adjusted their level of language accordingly, verifying comprehension as necessary (CIEP, 2011).

Teachers also reflected on the importance of:

- asking questions that provide students with opportunities to demonstrate the full extent of their French language proficiency, understanding of the topic, ability to request and provide information, express opinions, or debate
- providing opportunities for students to react in ways that demonstrate understanding
- allowing candidates to demonstrate the ability to begin and end interactions
- providing “think time” as required

Written Production

Reflecting on aspects of the written production tasks completed through this project may inform regular classroom practice to enhance development of writing skills in French. Analyzing the written productions along with the accompanying scoring grids, educators noted that students are required, with varying degrees of complexity, to:

- follow all aspects of instructions carefully
- consider the audience and use the appropriate level of language

- respect the text form and include all necessary elements
- refrain from using English and, if necessary, to think about other ways of expressing an idea
- build on the information provided in the prompt

In addition, particularly at the B2 level, students are required to:

- think creatively and offer original ideas that are substantiated

- express a variety of facts and opinions clearly, using a rich and varied vocabulary
- present ideas in a logical order, highlighting main points, and using a variety of complex sentence structures and connectors

Because students did not use reference materials while they completed the written production tasks for this project, it was an opportunity for them to demonstrate knowledge and skills that they had internalized.

SUMMARY OF STUDENT ORAL AND WRITTEN PRODUCTION

The samples include six oral productions and six written productions from Levels A1 to B2. The following are suggestions about how to use the samples and their accompanying scoring sheet:

- Discuss descriptors to reach a common understanding
- Before looking at the score that was determined by the CIEP, decide what you think the score should be. Be sure to note your rationale. Compare with the score and rationale given by the CIEP.
- Compare your score with that of a colleague. Discuss similarities and differences.

- Look at the score attributed by the CIEP, but not the rationale. Decide how this score is justified, using examples from the text. Compare your comments with those provided by the CIEP.

[T]he first step towards reducing the subjectivity of judgements made at all stages in the assessment process is to build a common understanding.

Council of Europe (2001), CEFR, p. 189

Guided judgement: ... conscious assessment in relation to specific criteria.

CEFR, p. 189

Oral Productions	Example 1	Examples 2 and 3	Examples 4 and 5	Example 6
Written Productions	Example 1	Examples 2 and 3	Examples 4 and 5	Example 6

A1 Samples

The oral sample comprised three parts. The first was a very brief interview during which the candidates answered questions about themselves. The second activity was an exchange of information, which required candidates to ask questions and respond to the answers provided. The last activity was a role play that required the candidates to make a purchase. No preparation time was allocated for the first activity, but candidates had ten minutes to reflect and make notes to help them in the second and third activities.

The written sample included two tasks. In the first task, candidates filled in a form, and in the second, they wrote simple sentences for a short text.

A2 Samples

The oral samples comprised three parts. The first was a brief interview during which the candidates provided information and answered questions about themselves. The second activity was a presentation lasting approximately two minutes on an everyday topic, followed by responses to questions posed by the examiner. The last activity was a role play which required the candidates to ask for and provide information in order to accomplish a task.

The written samples included two brief tasks. In the first, candidates described past activities and experiences, such as on a postcard. In the second task, candidates composed a written response (e.g., to accept or change plans).

B1 Samples

The oral samples comprised three parts. The first was an interview lasting two to three minutes, during which the candidates provided information and answered questions about themselves, their family, and their past, present and future projects. The second

Holistic Assessment and Analytic Assessment:

Holistic assessment is making a global synthetic judgement. Different aspects are weighed intuitively by the assessor.

Analytic assessment is looking at different aspects separately.

The advantage of the separate categories of an analytic approach is that they encourage the assessor to observe closely. They provide a metalanguage for negotiation between assessors and for feedback to learners.

CEFR, p. 190

component was an interactive activity with the examiner which required the candidates to interact appropriately in a given situation, such as to resolve a problem, take a stand and provide convincing arguments, or reach a compromise. The third component was based on a short text from which candidates were required to identify a discussion point, present and explain their opinion on the topic in approximately three minutes, and respond to questions posed by the examiner.

The written samples required that the candidates write a text, such as a letter, in which they presented facts and expressed their ideas and opinions in response to a situation described in the prompt provided.

B2 Samples

The oral sample required the candidates to take a stand on an issue based on a short article, present a logical argument justifying their points of view, and respond to questions and challenges to this opinion.

The written sample also involved taking a stance in order to write a text, such as a formal persuasive letter, in which candidates were required to develop well-organized, cohesive arguments and clearly present a number of substantiated points.

For more information on the levels, please see chapter 3 of the CEFR and visit: <http://www.ciep.fr/en/delfdalf/DELf.php>

ORAL PRODUCTION

When viewing the oral productions, a number of different aspects merit in-depth study.

The following chart provides suggestions for reflection related to the viewing focus. In the

context of a professional learning community, educators may wish to select one viewing focus for discussion and reflection.

Pragmatic competences are concerned with the functional use of linguistic resources (production of language functions, speech acts), drawing on scenarios or scripts of interactional exchanges. It also concerns the mastery of discourse, cohesion and coherence, the identification of text types and forms, irony, and parody. For this component even more than the linguistic component, it is hardly necessary to stress the major impact of interactions and cultural environments in which such abilities are constructed.

CEFR, p. 13

Oral Tasks: Discussion Questions

Viewing Focus	Suggestions for Reflection
Language Used by the Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the language used by the educators vary according to the CEFR level of the candidate? • What strategies do the educators use to elicit responses from the students? • How do I adapt the language I use in my daily practice to suit the level of the students?
Comportment of the Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the educators reduce the stress level for the students? • In my daily practice, how do I ensure that student production is not negatively affected by stress levels?
Types of Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare the types of tasks in each level. In my daily practice, how do students have experience participating in similar oral interactions? • What scaffolding might be required to ensure that students can successfully carry out these types of oral tasks? • How might I plan for assessment of oral interactions?
Pragmatic Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific functional uses of language or acts of speech does each task require students to demonstrate? • How do I design tasks that allow students to practise and demonstrate pragmatic competence?
Lengths of Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare the time allocated for each portion of the oral production at each level. • How might I plan the use of class time to allow students to practise these types of tasks? • How do I plan individual student conferences in order to provide feedback on oral production?
Instructions Provided Orally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What oral instructions are students given for each task? • What strategies do I use to develop my students' abilities to understand and follow oral instructions?

Viewing Focus	Suggestions for Reflection
Text or Graphic Prompts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of prompts are provided as the basis of student oral production? • What types of prompts do I use in my daily practice as a basis for oral production and interaction?
Language Used by the Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies do students use to convey their message? • What aspects of oral proficiency does the DELF scoring sheet address? • How might I co-construct success criteria with my students that reflect various specific aspects of oral proficiency? • How do I monitor quality of oral language and ensure all students are progressing when they are practising in small groups?
Content Provided by the Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence is there of critical and creative thinking in the various tasks? • How do I support my students in developing critical and creative thinking skills?

Direct assessment is assessing what the candidate is actually doing.

CEFR, p. 186

WRITTEN PRODUCTION

When analyzing student written productions, there is opportunity for rich discussion on various aspects of the tasks and the student work. Before considering the student work, examine the tasks, and compare the types of tasks at each level from A1 to B2.

Performance assessment requires the learner to provide a sample of language in speech or writing in a direct test.

CEFR, p. 187

Writing Tasks: Discussion Questions

- How are these writing tasks similar or different from those that are part of your daily practice?
- Would you consider these to be authentic tasks? Why or why not?
- Would you consider these to be action-oriented tasks? Why or why not?
- Do these tasks reflect the notion that the student is a “social agent” (CEFR, p. 1), meaning the student is able to express personality and understandings of identity?
- In what ways are the students writing to interact? How do you provide opportunities for your students to interact through writing?
- How can you support students in developing the ability to independently understand written instructions?
- What critical thinking skills do students need to successfully complete various tasks?
- These written tasks were completed without use of reference materials and within an allotted time. How can such on-demand writing assignments be useful in informing next steps?
- What strategies would help students successfully complete on-demand writing tasks?
- Certain tasks require students to use formal language. How do you explicitly plan opportunities for students to develop sociolinguistic skills?

What constitutes effectiveness in any given performance task will vary with the particular criterion being considered. Assessment of effectiveness may therefore focus on a quality such as appropriateness, clarity, accuracy, precision, logic, relevance, significance, fluency, flexibility, depth, or breadth, as appropriate for the particular criterion.

Ontario Ministry of Education (2010), Growing Success, p. 18

REFLECTING ON THE ORAL AND WRITTEN SAMPLES

After working with the oral and written samples, educators can use the following questions to guide their reflection:

- What distinguishes a level A1 from an A2, an A2 from a B1, or a B1 from a B2?
- If you didn't know the level, what would help you to be able to determine it correctly?
- How does an understanding of each CEFR level and of the progression through the levels contribute to a common understanding of the development of proficiency in FSL?
- Based on these samples, what feedback would you suggest for the students? How do the comments on the scoring sheets compare with the type of feedback you provide your students? How might the feedback you provide to your students on a regular basis differ as a result of your reflection and discussion?
- What instructional strategies or next steps would meet the students' needs?
- Do you notice any trends in the student productions? If so, what might be the implications for classroom practice?
- When you read the scores and comments accompanying each sample, did anything surprise you? Why or why not?
- If you had the opportunity to assess a sample before seeing the scoring sheet, what similarities and differences were there between your scoring and that provided by the CIEP?
- In your opinion, how can an understanding of the CEFR inform your teaching and assessment practices?
- In your opinion, how can the CEFR have a positive impact on the development of student proficiency?

MODERATED MARKING PROCESS

This video clip shows highlights of a moderated marking session during which FSL educators who volunteered to participate in the project scored the oral and written productions using the DELF scoring sheets.

In Ontario, educators use the achievement chart in the curriculum document to assess student work, and all assessment and evaluation practices are guided by *Growing Success*. Observing the moderated marking

process in this project allows educators to reflect on the analysis of student production with respect to specific criteria and on how discussion with colleagues can provide different perspectives.

The process of collaborative assessment of student work provides educators the opportunity to discuss:

- specific criteria related to developing proficiency in French
- observations and interpretations when comparing student productions to specific criteria
- feedback to students
- next instructional steps
- implications for planning and teaching

During the moderated marking, the educators in this project carefully read the scoring sheets specific to each level to score the student productions. They also discussed the criteria, noting observations such as:

- differences in the scoring sheets for each level (e.g., criteria, range of possible marks)
- similar terms that may cause confusion, such as ‘Vocabulary and Lexical Spelling’ and ‘Grammatical Spelling’
- total possible marks in the content portion as compared to the language structures portion that followed

Before looking at the student sample, the educators review and discuss relevant aspects of proficiency to develop a common understanding. They also review the task and instructions.

Rather than discussing their overall impressions of the student production, educators examine each criterion, sharing their notation and justification of marks awarded and deducted. While listening to oral productions or reading written productions, educators note specific phrases that help them justify their scoring. They are attentive to what students don’t say or write as well as what they do, particularly at the B levels, where the use of precise vocabulary and complex language structures is expected.

The discussion provides an opportunity for educators to check the observations they noted with colleagues and to ensure that they have evidence to justify their scoring. Reviewing the criteria together helps educators clarify their thinking regarding the student productions.

**Proficiency
can be seen as
competency
put to use.**

CEFR, p. 187

When perfection is not expected of students, this opens the door for rich discussion on what constitutes acceptable errors. If it is determined that marks should be deducted for errors, the next question is, how many?

When educators discuss student production, differences of opinion inevitably arise. Often, our greatest learning occurs through cognitive dissonance and discussion with those who offer a different point of view. The value of moderated marking is in learning how our colleagues interpret criteria and student performance. Since the goal is not to compromise, but to develop a common understanding, the discussion provides an opportunity for in-depth examination of student production, success criteria, and

possible interpretations of both of these. Analyzing several work samples can help educators identify areas of need for individual students as well as the needs of small or large groups. Although each student is unique, they have common needs. Educators discuss the implications for teaching, such as the importance of eliminating fossilized errors and increasing vocabulary, and suggest instructional strategies to provide targeted, explicit instruction that respond to areas of need.

REFLECTING ON MODERATED MARKING

After participating in a moderated marking session, educators can use the following questions to guide their reflection:

- How did using the achievement chart help your group focus on the categories of Knowledge and Understanding, Thinking, Communication, and Application?
- On which aspects of the student production did you and your colleagues most frequently agree? In your opinion, why was it easier to reach consensus on some aspects and more difficult for others?
- How was consensus reached when different perspectives were expressed?
- In your opinion, what are some benefits and drawbacks of moderated marking?
- How can criterion-referenced scoring help students develop greater proficiency?
- If you compared the scores your team arrived at to those from the CIEP, did you notice any trends (e.g., generally higher, lower, or aligned)?
- What did you learn through your participation in the moderated marking process?

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