MODULE 4:

Knowing Your Results by Monitoring and Evaluating Progress
HANDOUT 26

Assessment and Evaluation:
Indicators of Learner Progress and Program Success

Learners’ work-related English language needs, the proficiencies they have, and the proficiencies and skills needed on the job are all tied to assessment and ultimately, to the evaluation of program success. Documentation of varied informal assessments, therefore, become extremely important in demonstrating to both employees and employers the benefits of the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment of progress</th>
<th>Date completed</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preassessment (BEST, CASAS, surveys, LTA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learner’s initial self-assessment (interviews, surveys)</td>
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<td>Learner’s goals (class activities)</td>
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<td>On-going self-assessment (surveys, interviews, writing)</td>
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<td>Observations, testimony (by instructor, frontline supervisors, coworkers, learners themselves)</td>
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<td>Measures of skill achievements (work-related measures, promotions, training eligibility)</td>
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<td>Postassessment (BEST, CASAS, surveys, testimonials, learners’ final self-assessment)</td>
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<td>Outcomes</td>
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<td>• Level of achievement:</td>
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<td>• Changes in performance or behavior:</td>
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<td>• Employment status:</td>
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<td>• Further study recommended:</td>
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As the United States continued its shift from a manufacturing- to a service-based economy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, researchers reported that changes in employment patterns would require workers to have better communication skills and to be both literate and proficient in English (McGroarty & Scott, 1993). Not surprisingly, there was a rise in the number of workplace education programs for both native and non-native speakers of English. The U.S. Department of Education’s National Workplace Literacy Program (NWLP), which funded demonstration workplace projects offering instruction in basic skills, literacy, and English as a Second Language (ESL), fueled this increase by funding more than 300 projects between 1988 and 1994. Forty-nine percent of these projects included at least some ESL instruction.

With this increase in workplace instructional programs, a need has arisen for procedures to evaluate program effectiveness. Evaluations of ESL workplace programs seek to determine if the attention given to improving basic skills and English language proficiency has made a change in the participant and in the workplace. They also identify practices associated with program effectiveness so that successes can be replicated (Alamprese, 1994). This digest examines evaluation measures and activities used in workplace programs, and discusses issues associated with the evaluation of workplace ESL programs.

**Evaluation Measures and Activities**

Because numbers alone cannot show the depth or the breadth of a program’s impact, evaluations often use both quantitative and qualitative measures to gauge success in attaining program outcomes (Padak & Padak, 1991). Qualitative measures include focus groups and individual interviews, workplace observations, and portfolios of learner classwork (Alamprese, 1994). Quantitative measures include commercially available tests, scaled performance ratings, and some program-developed assessment tools, such as portfolios.

**Focus Groups and Stakeholder Interviews.** What is examined in an evaluation is determined by stakeholders’ (employers, labor unions, participants, teachers, funders) stated goals, expected outcomes for the program, and the resources available to the evaluator (Patton, 1987). As stakeholders may have different, possibly conflicting goals, it is important to clarify these goals and achieve a consensus beforehand as to which goals are most important to examine with the available resources (Fitz-Gibbon & Morris, 1987). The information gathered from the focus groups and stakeholder interviews should be recorded and accessible to the program and to the evaluators throughout the program.

**Observations.** Task analyses are generally used in curriculum development as educators observe and record their observations of the discrete steps included in workplace tasks such as setting up the salad bar for a cafeteria or making change for a customer at the cash register. The recorded observations are then plotted on a matrix of basic skills or English language skills. Although programs have relied on these analyses as a key data source for workplace outcomes (Alamprese, 1994), they do not represent the totality of skills used at the workplace. In order to better understand the range of skills needed for workplace success, other workplace-related activities such as staff meetings and union functions should also be observed.

**Participant and Supervisor Interviews.** Pre-program interviews with participants solicit information on their goals, their reasons for enrolling in the classes,
and their perceived basic skills and English language needs for the workplace. When matched with exit interview data, these data provide information to evaluate program outcomes. Because the purpose of these interviews is to obtain information about learner perceptions rather than to assess learner skills, it is advisable to use the native language when interviewing participants with low English skills.

Similarly, the direct supervisors of participants should be interviewed both before and after the program to compare initial assessment of learner needs and expected outcomes with actual results. It is also useful to interview the direct supervisors midway through the program for their feedback on worker improvement and to identify unmet needs.

**Tests and Other Types of Assessment.** Commercially available tests are commonly used as sources of quantitative data. The perceived objectivity of these tests and their long tradition of use make them appealing to managers and funders who often use them to make decisions regarding the continuation of a program. And, in fact, test-taking is a skill all learners need, and it is likely that ESL participants will come across this type of test in other contexts, as well.

Two commercially available tests that include workplace-related items and are often used in ESL programs are the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) ESL Appraisal. These instruments are easy to use, their reliability has been tested, and they allow for comparison among programs. The objections to these tests are that they may not measure what has been taught in the classroom, and they may have little applicability to specific workplace tasks or to a particular workplace. And, as with all tests, when interpreting results, evaluators and program staff should be aware that some errors may be due to ESL participants’ unfamiliarity with the format of the tests rather than to lack of content knowledge.

Because of the limitations of commercially available tests, a complete evaluation of learner progress requires using tests created for the program. **Performance-developed tests** are designed to measure the learner’s ability to apply what has been learned to specific workplace tasks (Alamprese & Kay, 1993). Because these tests are developed from authentic materials (e.g., job schedules, pay stubs, and union contracts) from participants’ own workplaces, the content is appropriate and likely to be familiar to the participants.

Another assessment measure is the portfolio of learner work. Portfolios often include samples of class work, checklists where learners rate their progress in basic and workplace skills, and journals where they record their reactions to class and workplace activities. Like interviews, these measures can provide vital information on learner attitudes and concerns. They are also a venue for self-assessment, and allow participants who are unable or unwilling to express themselves orally, or who have difficulty with formal tests, to demonstrate progress towards their goals.

**Quantifying Qualitative Measures.** To increase credibility and help ensure reliability of qualitative measures, evaluators collect multiple types of evidence (such as interviews and observations) from various stakeholders around a single outcome (Alamprese, 1994; Patton, 1987; Lynch, 1990). Data collected from the various measures can then be arranged into matrices. This chart-like format organizes material thematically and enables an analysis of data across respondents by themes (see Fitz-Gibbon & Morris, 1987; Lynch, 1990; and Sperazi & Jurmo, 1994).

Questionnaire and interview data can be quantified by creating a scale that categorizes responses and assigns them a numeric value. Improvement in such subjective areas as worker attitudes can then be demonstrated to funders and managers in a numeric or graphic form.

**Issues in Program Evaluation**

Many issues surround program evaluation for workplace ESL instruction. Stakeholders may have unrealistic expectations of how much improvement a few hours of instruction can effect. It is unlikely that a workplace ESL class of 40-60 hours will turn participants with low-level English skills into fluent speakers.
of English. Therefore, when interpreting findings, it is important for stakeholders to realize that ESL workplace programs may not provide enough practice time to accomplish substantial progress in English language proficiency.

The measurement of workplace improvement presents a special challenge, especially in workplace programs at hospitals, residential centers, and restaurants. What measures of workplace productivity exist where there is no product being manufactured? Improved safety (decreased accidents on the job) is a quantifiable measure, as is a reduction in the amount of food wasted in preparation. But how is improved worker attitude measured? Some ESL programs measure success by counting the increased number of verbal and written suggestions offered on the job by language minority workers or by their willingness to indicate lack of comprehension on the job (Mikulecky & Lloyd, 1994; Mrowicki & Conrath, 1994). Other programs record participant requests to be cross-trained or to learn other jobs at their workplaces (Alamprese & Kay, 1993). A long-term view is often needed, however, to discern changes in worker performance and in workplace productivity; longitudinal studies, where stakeholders are interviewed six months to a year after completion of a program, are recommended.

Even if data from longitudinal studies is available, it is not accurate to place all credit for improvement in worker attitude or workplace productivity (or blame for lack thereof) on the instructional program. Sarmiento (1993) asserts that other factors (Are there opportunities for workers to advance? Are the skills of all workers appreciated and used? Is worker input in decision making valued?) need to be considered when evaluating workplace programs. However, for ESL participants who come from cultures where assertiveness, ambition, and speaking up on the job may not be valued, the presentation of opportunities to succeed is not enough. Advancing oneself at the U.S. workplace is a cross-cultural skill, which, like language and literacy skills, must be taught.

Finally, funding is an important issue in evaluation. The activities described above (focus groups, interviews in English or in the native language, program-developed assessment instruments, extensive contacts with all stakeholders from before the program begins until months after completion) are costly. As federal funds are unlikely to be available, evaluations need to be structured so that they can provide practical information to the employers funding them.

Conclusion
Evaluation is a complex process that involves all stakeholders and must be an integral part of workplace ESL instructional programs before, during, and after the programs have been completed. When done appropriately, it can increase program effectiveness by providing valuable information about the impact of programs and highlighting areas where improvement is needed (Jurmo, 1994). And, a rigorous and complete evaluation can identify replicable best practices, enabling a program to serve as a model for other workplace ESL instructional programs.

References


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http://ericnet.net/db/edo/ED386961.htm
**TENNESSEE ESOL in the Workplace:**
**Sample Implementation Guidelines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Person responsible</th>
<th>Time required to accomplish task</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing the program</td>
<td>Adult ed supervisor</td>
<td>3 to 4 weeks/ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication with the workplace</td>
<td>ESOL teacher/workplace advisory board</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>Advisory board may consist of top-level management, personnel officers, union representatives, or line workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducting LTA (language task analysis)</td>
<td>ESOL teacher</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write job-related curriculum, including employee goals and employer’s goals</td>
<td>ESOL teacher</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teach the class</td>
<td>ESOL teacher</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct class assessment</td>
<td>ESOL teacher</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>This time includes administering the BEST and other assessments either supplied by the workplace or developed by the teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of workplace program</td>
<td>ESOL teacher, supervisor, and workplace advisory group</td>
<td>1 week</td>
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No doubt you still have many questions and are uncertain of just where and how to begin with a workplace ESOL initiative, so let’s focus on your plan of action. It is important to remember that not everything needs to happen at once and that some things must take precedence over others. But skipping steps is not really an option: Without a solid foundation of preparation, you are likely to be disappointed in the results.

The training you have just completed provides you with a knowledge base, an outline of the seven-step process, and a starting point. It has been designed to guide you and your staff through the major considerations to be made before beginning a workplace ESOL initiative; it is also intended to guide you through the process as you begin to develop expertise in providing educational services to business and industry.

To have a successful first-time workplace ESOL experience, you and your staff will need to devote some time to planning and meeting together and then with business partners. Some critical questions you must ask yourself include the following:

- How do I connect with businesses who may benefit from a workplace ESOL initiative?
- How do I find the right instructor(s) to make this initiative a success?
- How much will this cost and do I have the infrastructure to support it?
- What do I need to plan up front?
- What does a successful workplace ESOL initiative look like?
- What logistics must be taken care of before implementation?

Answers to these questions will vary somewhat, depending upon the workforce development network already in place in your county, as well as your own program’s infrastructure and service capacity. However, this training and the support that accompanies it can address all of your concerns.

Picking the Right Team: Requirements and Training

The instructor. Having the right people working with you is critical. Without question, the instructor you choose for your workplace ESOL initiative will, to a large extent, determine the success or failure of the program. You may want to think twice before turning to the instructor(s) you usually rely on for plum teaching assignments. You also want to avoid adding this assignment on to a long list of other assignments for which your favorite instructor is responsible. This initiative will require hard work, serious preparation, and a willingness to spend time learning about the workplace.

The instructor needs to be comfortable in the role of facilitating learning rather than being the sole source of learning. An instructor who prefers lecture as the primary method of instructional delivery is probably not the most appropriate choice for a workplace ESOL initiative. The instructor must be comfortable working with business (or willing to learn) and must be able to smoothly move back and forth between the business world and that of training and education. Few educators, however, can meet such expectations without staff development opportunities to learn. This is why involving the instructor(s) in the early stages of program planning and design is so important.

The program administrator. Most critical to the success of your workplace ESOL initiative is your willingness and commitment as an administrator. An instructor cannot successfully venture into the world of business and industry without strong instructional leadership. Your involvement will be critical every step of the way to plan, design, implement, and sustain a workplace ESOL initiative. A determination to see the process through, staying involved every step of the way, is a critical part of the program administrator’s responsibility. You or someone you appoint must be there to interact with both the business and the instructor on a regular basis. For many reasons, the instructor should
not be the one to negotiate or contract with a company for the delivery of educational services.

**Business and industry.** The third critical member of your team is the business and industry with which you hope to work. Training and retention are important and costly issues in the business world. You want them to view the workplace ESOL initiative as a potential part of their strategic plan to improve their bottom line (and invest in their employees, although that is not likely to be their first priority).

Unless you are already interacting with local businesses and industry and have strong business/education partnerships already established, they may have no idea that you can offer such services. In many instances, communities' familiarity with adult education services is limited to GED preparation. Here is where marketing becomes critical. Even well-established partnerships will have to be expanded to include workplace ESOL if these services are being offered for the first time. Remember, businesses operate in a profit mentality; your services must be perceived as a possible contribution to the bottom line if your relationship is going to be long lasting.

Don’t overlook the value of partnering with your local Chambers of Commerce. They can be a wonderful source of free publicity and validity in the business community.

**Company employees.** One should not necessarily assume that employers alone know what limited English proficient workers need in order to succeed in the workplace. The puzzle pieces only come together with input from both employer and employee. This includes frontline supervisors as well as those employees likely to enroll in the program. Naturally, different points of view will surface, and, perhaps, different skills will be valued. But gathering this information is a critical part of designing a workplace ESOL initiative. Even more important, soliciting employees’ input will build trust, support, and interest in the program.

**The Center for Literacy Studies.** The final critical partner in your efforts to initiate a workplace ESOL program is the Center for Literacy Studies and its partnership with Tennessee’s Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Office of Adult Education. As soon as you complete the training, your name and that of key program personnel will be added to the workplace ESOL discussion list. You will receive updates from the trainers, be able to access promising practices, ask questions, and share ideas with other field practitioners. The Center for Literacy Studies has been charged with making certain that quality workplace ESOL initiatives will be delivered throughout the state of Tennessee, wherever the need.

**Taking Care of Logistics**

**Partnering.** Whatever the program design, it is important that all stakeholders be a part of the planning process. The initiative will have a much better chance of success if all parties feel that they have a say in the design, implementation, and evaluation. Joint discussions around scheduling classes, recruitment strategies, and on-going support are critical and address issues about which assumptions should not be made. Remember, this venture takes both education and business into uncharted territory. You may also find yourself needing to persuade your educator colleagues that this is a worthwhile initiative.

For a workplace ESOL initiative to be successful, you will want to seek out business partners who

- may already have some history with employee training and/or view training as an investment in their business.
- are receptive to learning about the special needs of limited English proficient workers (note: in language they can understand).
- are committed to collaborative planning and implementation at the highest levels, via a limited number of meetings (time is precious to management).
- will commit middle management and frontline supervisors to participating in the planning and implementation.
- are willing to share information once they are assured that you understand the issues of confidentiality.
- are committed to supporting employees’ participa-
tion in the training (through release time, incentives, etc.).

Once you have identified businesses that you want to approach about workplace ESOL, plan to use their and your time effectively. Learn as much as you can about the company beforehand. If it has high employee turnover or is known for pitting overtime against participation in training, you may want to look elsewhere for a partner.

If you decide that a business is a suitable partner for a workplace ESOL initiative, take the time to nurture a working relationship. When you meet with management the first time, be ready: Have your marketing package ready; be prepared to provide a summary of the kind of curriculum you can provide; share your knowledge of the company, its services, products, and needs; and be prepared to ask questions that indicate you have at least a fundamental understanding of productivity and bottom-line issues. Be sure to share any positive press your program may have received in the community (and keep the press informed of future successes so you have an ongoing source of testimonials).

If the company seems seriously interested in offering workplace ESOL to its employees, you may be able to go into greater detail at the first or second meeting; or you can provide them with details in a letter following the initial meeting. You will want to assure them that you have targeted quality standards for your program, but that you also have expectations regarding the partnership. You will also want to refrain from making promises that may be difficult to deliver. Needs assessment and job shadowing are critical components that need to occur before services are discussed in any detail.

Regular communication between a company representative and you and your instructional staff is essential; decide how communication will be handled, and make certain that written, documentable communiqués are part of the process.

Costs. Costs for workplace ESOL—above and beyond what is spent on more traditional adult education programs—will largely depend upon what you already have in place. There will be additional dollar and manpower costs for instructor planning time, needs assessment and language task analysis, administrative participation in meetings with business partners, instructional materials, consumables, and travel. Finally, you and your instructor(s) will need time to develop marketing materials and evaluation reports.

But the adult education program alone should not bear the burden of these costs. In fact, a workplace ESOL initiative, when carefully planned, can generate both student numbers and revenue. Many businesses have training dollars, although traditionally less than two percent of corporate training dollars are spent on basic skills development. In addition, a downturn in the economy may negatively impact access to training funds. This is where dialogue and negotiations become important.

Having a company pay for instructional materials, so that each employee has his/her own set of materials, is a new concept for many adult educators. Oftentimes a company is willing to pay for both materials and the instructor’s salary. Administrative costs are also a consideration. Corporate America is accustomed to paying a fair price for quality services; adult educators are more accustomed to “nickel and diming” it and often under rate the value of their services. The training materials are intended to help you more realistically cost your services as an education and training provider.

Capturing Data. Another challenge to adult education is that of capturing data documenting changes in workers’ behavior and performance on the job. While as educators we may be unaccustomed to this kind of assessment, it is what businesses value most. You will want to use the templates included in the training materials to adapt and design means of capturing this information. Your instructor(s) and the company’s frontline supervisors will play critical roles in gathering this data.
HANDOUT 29B

Okay, Now That I’ve Completed This Training, What Do I Do? Praxis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Products</th>
<th>Activities: What needs to be done?</th>
<th>Action steps</th>
<th>Parties responsible</th>
<th>Order/priority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission Statement</td>
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<td>Fact Sheet</td>
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<td>Marketing Packet/Plan</td>
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<td>Clear, Achievable Goals and Objectives</td>
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<td>Products</td>
<td>Activities: What needs to be done?</td>
<td>Action steps</td>
<td>Parties responsible</td>
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<td>Proposal for Services</td>
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<td>Letter of Agreement</td>
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<td>Reporting Process</td>
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<td>Final Report</td>
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### Action Plan for Praxis (Practical Application)

Now that you have prioritized your program needs, this form is to be used to outline the contents of the praxis you will begin working on immediately after the initial training. You will be expected to report on your activities via the workplace ESOL discussion list and during the follow-up training scheduled for the spring. Please plan to bring sufficient copies of your status report and/or products for all training participants.

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<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Responsible parties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you anticipate any obstacles?</td>
<td>What if any assistance do you anticipate you may need from training staff?</td>
<td>Status Report: Reports and/or products for follow up training</td>
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HANDOUT 30

Training Evaluation Form: Evaluation of Introduction to ESOL in the Workplace Workshop Series

Please check your primary role:

☐ Instructor  ☐ Supervisor or coordinator

Indicate your geographical location:

☐ Rural  ☐ Suburban  ☐ Urban

For the following questions, please circle the number that best describes your evaluation.

1. Thinking back on the 3 main reasons you wanted to attend this workshop series, how satisfied are you with the results?

2. To what extent did you increase your understanding of unique characteristics of workplace ESOL programs?

3. To what extent did you increase your understanding of the basics of planning, implementing, and evaluating a workplace ESOL program?

4. To what extent do you think you can now plan lessons for a workplace ESOL program?

5. On a scale of 1–4, with 4 being the highest score, how would you rate this workshop series?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely</th>
<th>Very much</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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Comments:

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What additional skills and knowledge would you need to effectively implement an ESOL in the workplace program?

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