

Working with Language Proficiencies

Don Bouchard: What I would like you to do; I'm going to split you up into four separate groups. This first, um, part of the activity is more general, and then we'll really make it more specific. What I would like you folks to do over here [indicating a group of participants] is, let's do a combination of listening, maybe you folks doing listening, the four of you, and then you folks doing speaking [indicating a second group]. How are we going to do this? Three and three. Let's do this: [pointing to different groups of participants] listening, speaking, and then reading and writing. Ok? I'm going to have you folks do writing, yep, ok? Listening, speaking, reading and writing; here's what I want you to do; here's what I want you to do. With this as your reference point [indicating screen], using the water cycle, I want you to take a look at the performance definition sheet, the general one, the RG47 from the 2007, um, uh, Resource Guide. Take a look at that and with the defining features kind of on the side, have a discussion around what would, in your language, your, um, assigned language domain, what would be the kind of, um, language expectations for a level one, a level two, a three, a four and a five. See if you can come up with two or three defining features of what students could do to either read, write, listen or speak about the water cycle.

Participant: when you say defining features...

Bouchard: linguistic complexity, forms and conventions, and vocabulary.

[Participant discussion; inaudible]

Bouchard: Listening, speaking, reading—reading over here—and you folks here, writing, ok?

[Participant discussion; inaudible]

Bouchard: yes?

Participant: I would have the water cycle be the water cycle with the arrows labeled appropriately [inaudible]...

Bouchard: Ok, so you show it as a process. Yep. Yeah. Ok. And, and also, and I overheard you say, use, use the, um, use the, the actual words: precipitation, condensation, evaporation. All of those words, and the question might arise, "Well, gee, would that be appropriate like at a, at a, um early to mid, uh, elementary level?" And the answer is, yes, it is!

Participant: because you're developing academic language.

Bouchard: Absolutely!

Participant: Well, it's already part of the standards in most grades.

Bouchard: It's already part of...sure. Exactly. Exactly. Yep. There's that feature as well. So this is kind of dipping in to the notion of how the standards play out with regard to the defining features, and then an exploration of how they pertain to the English language proficiency levels. There is one additional, and actually, final step to the standards framework, which makes it all much more specific, and that is the anchor or the exemplar stage, which is in the form of Model Performance Indicators, the MPIs.