

Using the KSB ESL Competency Scale to Support Learning

Why a developmental scale?

The Kativik School Board's Secondary ESL program utilizes a **developmental competency scale**. This has been a deliberate decision by the program authors based upon the needs of the teachers and the students within Nunavik.

The developmental scale shows the progression of each competency. It is not meant to be a lock-step grid, but rather a guideline to help teachers in their ability to judge individual student progress and to support the teachers by guiding their choices of learning situations.

Inclusive nature of the scales



When using the scales, the teachers should read all of the levels starting from **level 1** and progressing through to **level 12**. It is important to gain an understanding of all the levels, as the scales are inclusive. This means that descriptors are not necessarily repeated in each level. Whatever a student has achieved in a level, it still exists in the next level, even if it is not described. This decreases repetitiveness within the scales.

Placement within the levels

It can be difficult to determine the level a student is working at. This is where professional judgment must come into play. Teachers need to diagnose students at the beginning of the learning to determine the current level of competency. This can be done in many ways.

A teacher can observe the oral comfort of a student while in directed discussions, ask specific question and listen for answers, create a situation where dialogue occurs and review how the students responds.

The teacher can ask the students to complete sentences, describe in point form a friend, or ask the students to write a short text. The teacher could read a text and ask the students to respond through guided questions, have the students attend to a video and then complete a set of instructions shared via the media or ask the students to express in any way their opinion on an issue about which they have read.

Whatever way is selected, the teacher must know what they are looking for and what a student, showing certain traits, needs in their competency development. This can then translate to a starting point in the development of the competency.

Using the Scales

The MELS, in their document, *Evaluation of Learning at the Secondary Level* (Preliminary Version 2007), suggests practices for the proper use of the scales of competency levels.

The teacher should:

- offer the students frequent opportunity during the cycle to demonstrate their competencies in various ways
- explain the scales and their use to the student and ask them to assess their competencies using the scales
- keep relevant records of student learning in sufficient quantity to form a basis for making judgments, using the evaluation criteria... (set out by KSB)
- build up a judgment gradually, and update it using the latest learning and evaluation situations
- make a general association between a student's competency and one of the levels on the scale, without carrying out a point-by-point comparison between the observations made and the statement for a given level
- Report more detailed information as needed for certain students, for example, within the individual education plan

Each student, regardless of grade level, has his or her own placement on the competency scale. The student should be aware of this and should then be made aware that their task will be to increase their competency. A student should be encouraged to progress as much as possible, but the student should be aware that progress takes time. It is important that teachers and students be realistic about the learning that occurs within a specified time frame. By setting smaller, more attainable goals, students will be able to see their progress and know what learning they need to target. A student cannot be expected to jump from a level 6 to a level 9 in one school year (although this may occur). Given a level 6, it is hopeful that a student will move to a 7 or perhaps even an 8 in a school year. These smaller jumps are more attainable for the students and more manageable for the teacher in terms of planning for differentiated instruction within a class.

