Teacher's Guidelines

Heritage Language (HL) Student Self-Assessments

Introduction

All students want to be enthusiastic about learning and to set goals for themselves. Students who are motivated and feel they have some control over their learning tend to work harder and have greater success.

For these reasons, the Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages (SOHL), working in collaboration with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, has prepared a series of student self-assessments for use in provincial heritage language schools.

Through the use of self-assessment forms, students, teachers and families will be able to see the **language progress** that students have already made and the **skills** that students have in the heritage language. The assessments describe what students "can do," rather than what they cannot do.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment has many benefits. It helps students to:

- think about their learning
- be responsible for their own learning
- set learning goals for themselves
- be more enthusiastic about language learning
- recognize the language skills they have mastered
- identify gaps in their language learning

The heritage language assessment forms make self-assessment easier by focusing on practical uses of language. The "I can" statements describe the way that language is used in everyday life.

Students can use the self-assessment process best when their teacher provides some explanation and instruction. The teacher's role varies with the age of the student. Young children need a great deal of help. Teenagers need much less help. These teacher's guidelines provide information about the way in which heritage language teachers can help students of various ages assess their language learning.

Common Framework of Reference – CFR

The student self-assessments are based on the *Common Framework of Reference for Languages* (CFR). See the Appendix at the end of these teacher's guidelines for more information about the *Common Framework of Reference for Languages*. The CFR provides consistent standards and terminology so that all language learners are assessed according to the same criteria. The CFR was first developed to bring consistency to the teaching, learning and assessment of European languages. It has now been translated into more than 30 languages, including several non-European languages. The CFR is widely used throughout the world.

The CFR is not language-specific. The "I can" statements describe actions, behaviours and skills that are common to most languages. For example, in every language students "Can clearly explain how something is done or used (e.g., how to boil water)," "Can retell a simple story read/heard in class," "Can write simple sentences with assistance," and "Can ask spontaneous questions." The CFR describes what a student can do. It helps students and their families recognize the progress students have made and the skills they have mastered.

Plurilingualism – The CRF recognizes that language learners become plurilingual. A learner of a second or third language does not lose competence in a first language, nor is the new language kept totally separate from the old. Plurilingualism means that each language enriches the other and contributes to intercultural awareness, skills and know-how.

Language Skills and Language Levels in the HL Self-Assessment Forms

Language Skills – The *Common Framework of Reference for Languages* organizes language teaching, learning and assessment into five skills: listening, conversation, speaking, reading and writing. The self-assessment forms are organized into the same five skills. The icons used to identify each skill are in Chart 1.

Chart #1: Skills in Self-Assessment Forms				
Listening	**Conversation**	**Speaking**	**Reading**	**Writing**

Language Levels – The CFR is organized into language levels. The SOHL student self-assessment forms are organized around the first seven CFR language levels. See Chart #2 below for the language levels.

Chart #2: Language Levels in Self-Assessment Forms			
Pre-A1	**A1 *(A1.1 + A1.2)***	**A2 *(A2.1 + A2.2)***	**B1 *(B1.1 + B1.2)***
Pre-Basic	Basic	Advanced Basic	Independent

HL Student Self-Assessment Forms

SOHL has developed 10 forms for heritage language students to assess their own learning.   These forms are as follows:

Early Years (Preschool, Prekindergarten, Kindergarten)

- Sheet #1 – Pre A1.1 and A1.1

Elementary (Grades 1 – 5)

- Sheet A1 – A1.1 and A1.2
- Sheet A2 – A2.1 and A2.2
- Sheet B1 – B1.1 and B1.2

Middle Years (Grades 6 – 9)

- Sheet A1 – A1.1 and A1.2
- Sheet A2 – A2.1 and A2.2
- Sheet B1 – B1.1 and B1.2

Secondary/Adult (Grades 10 – 12 and adult)

- Sheet A1 – A1.1 and A1.2
- Sheet A2 – A2.1 and A2.2
- Sheet B1 – B1.1 and B1.2

Choosing the Right Form for Each Student – There are 10 self-assessment forms. The first step is to select the most appropriate form for each student.

> The student's grade level at school and current skills in the heritage language determine the assessment form to be used.
>
> For example, if a student is in **Grade 3** at school:
>
> **Step 1:** Select from the **Elementary** series of assessment forms.
>
> **Step 2:** If the student is a beginning language learner, start with **Form A1.1**.
>
> **Step 3:** If the student has some experience with language learning, choose Form **A1.2 or higher**.
>
> **Step 4:** Move on to the next form in the series as the student's language skills grow over time.

The example above is for a student in Grade 3 (elementary) at school.

- If the student is in **Kindergarten**, **Prekindergarten** or **Preschool**, use the **Early Years** assessment form.

- If the student is in **Grades 1-5** at school, select from the **Elementary** series of assessment forms.

- If the student is in **Grades 6-9** at school, select from the **Middle Years** series of assessment forms.

- If the student is in **Grades 10-12** at school or an adult, select from the **Secondary/Adult** series of assessment forms.

Please note that the Middle Years and Secondary/Adult assessments are very similar. This is because language learners develop skills along a similar path in the upper years.

Completing the Self-Assessment Forms

All of the SOHL self-assessment forms are organized in a similar way. They begin with identifying information, followed by a series of "I can" statements.

Student Identification – At the top of each form space is provided for the following information:

- the student's name
- the grade the student is in during the current school year
- the heritage language school the student attends
- the language the student is learning
- the public or separate school the student attends
- the community in which the student's school is located
- the student's Ministry of Education Student Number.

The top of the form looks like this:

My name is _____. I am in Grade _____ during the 20__ to 20__ school year.

This is my Ministry of Education Student Number

I attend _____ to learn the _____ language.
(Name of Heritage Language School)

I attend _____ in _____ Saskatchewan.
(Name of Public/Separate School)   (Town/City)

Teacher's Initials   Date

Filling Out the Top of the Form – Students can complete the top part of their self-assessment form together in class. This will help ensure that all information is provided. If students are too young to complete the form on their own, ask parents to help.

Ministry of Education Student Number – In Saskatchewan every student from Prekindergarten to Grade 12 has a student number. The student or his/her parents will be able to get the student number from the school principal and write it in the box on the self-assessment form.

Teacher's Initials and Date – Leave this blank. The teacher will fill it in after each self-assessment has been completed.

Self-Assessment – A series of "I can" statements follows the identifying information. The statements are organized into the five CFR skills of listening, conversation, speaking, reading, and writing. Students are asked whether they can demonstrate each skill with "a lot of help," "a little help," or "no help."

Chart #3: "I can" Statements in HL Student Self-Assessments

Reading – A2.1	With a lot of help	With a little help	With no help	Date
I can follow a set of clear instructions (a simple recipe, directions) especially if there are diagrams				
I can get the main idea in magazines (print and/or electronic) when the subjects are familiar				
I can understand most of a well-organized short story and identify the main characters				
I can understand short, simple writing on familiar topics that contains many words I already know				
			/4	

Speaking – A2.2	With a lot of help	With a little help	With no help	Date
I can say most numbers (including the year) without hesitation and can describe simple mathematical processes				
I can say what I like or dislike about a book, song, place or event and give reasons for my opinion				
I can give a summary of a short story I heard and tell the order in which events happened				
I can talk about familiar places and historical figures and events using simple language				
			/4	

Each **student** self-assesses and puts checkmarks in the appropriate boxes. The teacher or student puts the date on which the assessment of each particular skill was done in the box on the right.

In the example in Chart #4, the student was self-assessing the skill "I can understand hello and goodbye and when someone calls me by name".

- The first self-assessment was on November 4, 2014. On November 4, 2014 the student could do this skill "with a little help."

- The second self-assessment was on May 10, 2015. On May 10, the student could do this skill "with no help."

Chart #4: Example of Completed SOHL Self-Assessment Form

Elementary A1.1 (Two assessment dates – November/May)

Listening – A1.1	With a lot of help	With a little help	With no help	Date
I can understand hello and goodbye and when someone calls me by name		✔		Nov. 4, 2014
			✔	May 10, 2015
I can recognize and understand the words for people and things around me (teacher, book, chair)				
I can understand simple questions about me, such as "How old are you?"				
I can understand simple instructions such as "Close your book," "Put on your coat."				
I can identify colours by pointing to them				
				/4

Frequency of Self-Assessments – It is recommended that students self-assess their language skills using the self-assessment form *at least once during the school year* and then again *at the end of the year.*

Working with Young Students – Teachers can work with individual students to complete the self-assessment. Focus on one or two of the "I can" statements in one session. For example, you might ask a student to name items in a picture, to sing a song or to write down his/her name. Then the student can check the appropriate box on the self-assessment form.

Working with Older Students – Students may work individually, in small groups or as a whole class. Some ideas for completing the self-assessment form are given below.

- **Whole class** – Have students read out the "I can" statements. Ask students to check the appropriate box for the language skill described.   Students may need time to think of examples of each skill. Teachers can help by reminding students of topics, activities, assignments or projects they have done in the language class.

- **Small groups** – Students can begin by reading the "I can" statements out loud to each other so they can think about what they have learned. They may want to demonstrate to each other the language skill in the "I can" statements.

- **Individually** – Students may complete the form on their own, either during class or as homework. A parent or teacher may ask them to demonstrate the skill in each "I can" statement. Students share their completed self-assessments with the teacher. If, as a teacher, you disagree with a student's judgement on a particular skill, then ask the student to explain their reasoning and to demonstrate the language skill.

Teacher's Initials and Date – There is a double box on the top right corner of each self-assessment form. After both the student and teacher have reviewed the self-assessment form, the teacher puts her/his initials and the current date in the box to show that the form has been reviewed and the teacher agrees with the student's self-assessment of language skills.

Teacher's Initials	Date

In Chart #5 below, the student completed the first self-assessment on November 20, 1014, so the teacher put her or his initials in the top box along with the date.

The student completed the second self-assessment on May 10, 2015. The teacher put her initials in the bottom box along with the date.

The teacher initials and dates the form only after she or he and the student have discussed and resolved any difference of opinion they may have about the amount of help a student needs in specific skills.

Chart #5: Teacher's Initials and Date	

J.M.	Nov. 20, 2014
J.M.	May 10, 2015
Teacher's Initials	Date

Identifying Each Student's Language Level

In the self-assessments, each of the five language skill areas (listening, conversation, speaking, reading and writing) is marked separately. It is common for students to have different strengths in each of these skill areas. For example, a student may have good listening and conversation skills, but may need help in other skill areas.

At the end of the year, a single language level for each student is calculated. The student's level is the level where s/he can do more than half of the "I can" statements without help.

Example #1: In Example #1, the student was able to do, without help, 10 out of 18 of the "I can" statements at the A1.2 level. This is more than half, so the student's overall level is A1.2.

A1.2 Listening 3/4	A1.2 Conversation 3/4	A1.2 Speaking 2/4	A1.2 Reading 1/3	A1.2 Writing 1/3	Overall Level: A1.2 10/18

Example #2: In Example #2, the student was able to do 8 out of 19 of the "I can" statements at the B1.1 level. This is less than half, so the student hasn't yet achieved level B1.1. The student is at the next lowest level which is A2.2

B1.1 Listening 3/4	B1.1 Conversation 2/4	B1.1 Speaking 1/4	B1.1 Reading 1/3	B1.1 Writing 1/4	Overall Level: A2.2 8/19

Using the Self-Assessment Forms to Improve Student Learning

Student self-assessments can be used to improve student learning. Teachers will be able to adapt their teaching to suit student learning needs. If a student can demonstrate a certain language skill "with no help," this means that the language skill is firmly in place.

For example, the student who "Can use simple sentences to describe my surroundings, everyday activities, family and friends" without help has mastered that skill. However, if a student needs "a little help" or "a lot of help" with this skill, more practice is needed to help the student master the skill. Lessons can be designed so that individual students or the class as a whole get the practice they need to improve their language skills.

Involving Parents

Parents and families are always interested in their children's progress at heritage language school. Students will be completing two self-assessments each year: one in the middle of the year and one at the end.

- **Mid-Year Assessment** – It is best to share the self-assessment form with parents during a parent-teacher meeting. If this isn't possible, you can ask the student to take the self-assessment form home for parents to review. The student should bring the form back to heritage language school after parents have reviewed it.

- **End of Year Assessment** – Again it is appropriate for parents and the teacher to discuss the form together. Then students can take it home to keep.

During the year, students' self-assessment forms can be kept in their language portfolios. A language portfolio contains samples of assignments or other work in the heritage language, as well as self-assessment forms.

Sources

- The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* is the foundation for the student self-assessments and accompanying teacher's guidelines. To read the full *Common European Framework of Reference* go to: www.coe.int/lang-CEFR

- To read a *Teacher's Guide to the Common European Framework* go to: www.tuttolingue.net/pdf/CFRguide.pdf

- Specific "I can" statements in the self-assessment forms have been adapted from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's *Guide to Using the Common Framework of Reference (CFR) with Learners of English as an Additional Language*, www.education.gov.sk.ca/guide-to-using-cfr-with-eal.

- The "I can" statements in the early years self-assessment have also been adapted from the *Saskatchewan Kindergarten Curriculum Guide*, www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca

Appendix

Background: Common Framework of Reference (CFR) for Languages

The information below has been abridged from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education document *A Guide to Using the Common Framework of Reference (CFR) with Learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL). September 2013.*

Overview of the CFR

The definition of a given level of language proficiency can be vague and subjective. For example, what one assessor may view as an "advanced beginner" level could be viewed as an "intermediate" level by another assessor. To address this inconsistency, an international scale of language descriptors, the Common Framework of Reference (CFR)… sets consistent standards for teaching, learning, and assessment.

The CFR is…	The CFR is *NOT*…
- A language reference tool. - Useful for educators, language learners, and parents. - A way to display continued language growth along a continuum. - Positive and engaging. - Applicable across grades and subjects - Inclusive and user-friendly.	- A curriculum for EAL. - A rigid checklist. - Subject specific. - Grade/age specific - Limited to use by EAL specialists. - A new program. - Culturally biased for European languages.

Background

The background to the CFR is the **Common European Framework of Reference** (CEFR) for languages, first officially published in 2001 after three decades of research on language teaching, learning, and assessment. It was developed and refined as a result of collaboration by linguists, researchers, specialists, and educators assigned to this task by the Council of Europe. The CEFR has "international currency", meaning that it is has validity and reliability as a global scale of reference. Currently, it is being used in over forty countries around the world. In January 2010, the *Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC)* recommended use of the CEFR as a reference tool for languages in Canada.

The complete CEFR Global Scale defines levels of language ability within three broad bands of performance and six levels: **Basic (A1, A2), Independent (B1, B2),** and **Proficient (C1, C2).** Each level describes language progress in five skill areas: Listening, Spoken Interaction, Spoken Production, Reading, and Writing.

The abbreviated term **Common Framework of Reference (CFR)** is used in Saskatchewan in keeping with the title of Laurens Vandergrift's initial research document *Proposal for a Common Framework of Reference for Languages for Canada* (2006).

CEFR Global Scale

Proficient User	**C2**	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.
Independent User	**B2**	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	**A2**	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment, and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows, and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (p. 5)
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