

Translating Standards into Practice with ELA Students

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Abstract

*Standards-based professional practices are increasingly a distinct focus of both teacher preparation and staff development. Yet, such standards are not always fully translated into rubrics for monitoring and assessment. This is no less the case as teachers build their capacities for English language acquiring (ELA) students. Recent trends indicate the widespread use of the CREDE, Standards for Effective Pedagogy and Learning (Doherty, Hillberg, Epaloose, and Tharp, 2002) for this purpose. This article describes the history of, and rationales behind the translation of these standards into a more purposive **Biography Driven Practices** rubric for grade-level teachers of ELA students.*

Rapidly changing demographics in today's K-12 classrooms favor teachers who are highly effective with English language acquiring (ELA) students. Both teacher preparation programs and inservice development have been impacted. Teaching standards now value educators who have the "knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn" (NCATE, 2008, p. 12). However -- What does instruction designed to help all students learn look like? More specifically -- What does instruction designed to accommodate the assets and needs of ELA students look like?

High-Quality Instruction through the Lens of the CREDE Standards

Leadership from the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) has endeavored to answer these questions. These field and research endeavors have culminated a set of five standards, referred to as the Standards for Effective Pedagogy and Learning (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000; CREDE, 2002). Briefly, the standards are as follows:

1. Joint Productive Activity -- Teacher and students producing together
2. Language Development -- Developing language and literacy across the curriculum
3. Contextualization -- Making meaning: Connecting school to students' lives
4. Challenging Activities -- Teaching complex thinking
5. Instructional Conversation -- Teaching through conversation

These standards are intended to provide instructional recommendations that apply to all students.

These Standards have been endorsed by the National Education Association, and provide a solid philosophical foundation for instructional practice with diverse student populations. Among other aspects of instruction, the standards emphasize (a) academic language development; (b) contextualization of academic concepts within the experience and knowledge that students bring from home, community, and school; and (c) student engagement. The CREDE, Standards Performance Continuum (SPC), is a 5-point rubric designed to quantitatively evaluate teachers according to these standards (Doherty, Hillberg, Epaloose, & Tharp, 2002). Criteria are provided for each level of enactment (not observed, emerging, developing, enacting, integrating) for each standard.

Development of the Biography-Driven Practices Rubric

Although the Standards for Effective Pedagogy and Learning emphasize appropriate accommodations for ELA students, the educational philosophy described in CREDE's explanation of standards and indicators is not fully reflected in the existing SPC. For example, specifics regarding how teachers should put into practice more recent knowledge gains in second-language acquisition research and theory were needed. Of particular importance to teachers is the knowledge we have gained about the ways in which ELA students' backgrounds and experiences (i.e., their biographies) may enable their connections to, and success with, the classroom curriculum (Herrera, 2010). The authors have, therefore, enriched the SPC to create the Biography-Driven Practices (BDP) rubric.

Features of the BDP Rubric

The BDP rubric retains the CREDE emphasis on the Standards for Effective Pedagogy and Learning and utilizes the same descriptors for levels of enactment. However, the rubric now includes 22 observable indicators, many of which specifically address new knowledge gained about effective practices for ELA students. These fundamentals and their associated indicators align with CREDE's explanation of appropriate standards/indicators. Yet they have been enhanced to reflect ten years of professional development with, and research on, teachers' grade-level practices with ELA students in seven states where the CLASSIC[®] Program Model has been implemented (Murry & Herrera, 1999; Herrera, Murry, & Pérez, 2008). These CLASSIC[®] fundamentals, as now incorporated in the BDP rubric, include:

- ◆ Low-risk learning and second language acquisition environments (Herrera, 2010; Krashen, 1981, 1982).
- ◆ Pre-assessment of the background knowledge and experiences of ELA students (Herrera, 2010; Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

- ◆ Incorporation of content and language objectives for ELA students (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008; Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2003), including those that target literacy development skills (e.g., reading, writing, viewing and representing) through the content curriculum (Herrera & Murry, in press).
- ◆ Grouping configurations that variously account for all four dimensions of the ELA student biography (sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, academic) (Herrera & Murry, in press) and promote English language acquisition (Herrera, 2010).
- ◆ The recurrent use of the native language in academic and linguistic development for ELA students (Cummins, 1981; Goldenberg, 2008; Herrera, 2010).

The BDP rubric offers teachers and mentors a seamless transition from theory to practice, as they use their knowledge of such CLASSIC[®] fundamentals in their daily instruction for ELA and other students.

Challenging Activities” within the BDP Rubric: A Close-Up

To illustrate how CLASSIC[®] fundamentals have been used to enhance CREDE’s SPC, we turn to the standard of *Challenging Activities*. The original criteria for the “enacting” level of this performance continuum read as follows: “The teacher designs and enacts activities that are connected to academic content; assists and uses challenging standards to advance student understanding to more complex levels; AND provides students with feedback on their performance” (2002, p. 82). The BDP rubric expands criteria for this standard to include five separate indicators that emphasize:

- ◆ Accommodations (curricular and/or instructional) that are responsively based on students’ academic biographies and/or stage of English language acquisition.
- ◆ Content and language objectives that verbally stated and written/posted (including those indicative of students’ biographies).
- ◆ Challenging (academic or language-based) activities, with clear expectations and benchmarks for performance.
- ◆ Assessment tools or strategies that explore and/or monitor students’ affective levels of response to instruction.
- ◆ Feedback on student performance that helps students monitor or confirm their own levels of comprehension and learning.

As these examples illustrate, the BDP rubric adds enhancement indicators to the SPC that better account for what we have learned about: student biographies, sheltered instruction, language acquisition, and student achievement.

Conclusion

The CREDE Standards for Effective Pedagogy and Learning (2002) continue to offer teachers and teacher educators a solid theoretical foundation for accommodative practices with ELA students. However, the BDP rubric offers

enhancements that better account for what we have learned about the assets and differential learning needs of ELA students. Ultimately, the BDP better accounts for those teaching practices that may noticeably enhance grade-level classroom instruction for ELA students.

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Biography-Driven Practices (BDP) Rubric

	Not Observed 0	Emerging 1	Developing 2	Enacting 3	Integrating 4
<i>General Definition</i>	<i>The standard is not observed.</i>	<i>One or more elements of the standard are enacted.</i>	<i>The teacher designs and enacts activities that demonstrate a partial enactment of the standard</i>	<i>The teacher designs and enacts activities that demonstrate a complete enactment of the standard.</i>	<i>The teacher designs, enacts, and assists in activity that demonstrates skillful integration of multiple standards simultaneously.</i>
Joint Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students work independently of one another. ◆ Seats students with a partner or group, based on random grouping or student self-selection. 	<p>The teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides minimal opportunities for student interaction. ◆ Considers one dimension of the CLD student biography (sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, or academic). 	<p>The teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides occasional opportunities for student interaction. ◆ Considers two to three dimensions of the CLD student biography (sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic). ◆ Makes relevant connections between the activity and the lesson. 	<p>The teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides frequent opportunities for student interaction. ◆ Considers two to three dimensions of the CLD student biography (sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic) as appropriate for the task/activity. ◆ Frequently uses insights from the activity to make connections to the lesson, affirm learning, & modify instruction, as needed. 	<p>The teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides consistent opportunities for student interaction. ◆ Considers all four dimensions of the CLD student biography (sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic) as appropriate for the task/activity. ◆ Consistently uses insights from the activity to make connections, affirm learning, and modify instruction, as needed.
Language & Literacy Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Instruction is dominated by teacher talk and students are passive listeners. ◆ No evidence of native language in environment or instruction. ◆ No references to students' prior knowledge. 	<p>The teacher provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Minimal emphasis on academic talk during the lesson; students engage in social talk while working. ◆ Minimal evidence of native language in environment and/or instruction. ◆ Minimal references to students' prior knowledge. 	<p>The teacher provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Listening, speaking, reading, or writing activities with occasional opportunities for academic language development. ◆ Occasional use of the native language during the lesson. ◆ Occasional references to students' prior knowledge and background experiences related to language and literacy development. 	<p>The teacher provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Frequent opportunities for student expression and academic language development in activities that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing. ◆ Explicit support of students' use of the native language during the lesson. ◆ Frequent references to students' prior knowledge and background experiences related to language and literacy development. 	<p>The teacher provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Consistent opportunities for student expression and academic language development in activities that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing. ◆ Consistent, structured opportunities for students to use their native language as a resource during the lesson. ◆ Consistent use of students' ways of comprehending, communicating, and expressing themselves as a springboard for language and literacy development.
Contextualization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No effort to pre-assess students' academic knowledge about the topic. ◆ Focus solely on content delivery. ◆ New information is presented in an abstract, disconnected manner. 	<p>The teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Makes efforts to pre-assess students' academic knowledge about the topic. ◆ Provides minimal opportunities for students to share content-related connections to background knowledge with peers. ◆ Makes connections between students' existing academic knowledge and new content concepts. 	<p>The teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Makes some effort to pre-assess students' funds of knowledge, prior knowledge, and academic knowledge about the topic or key content vocabulary. ◆ Provides occasional opportunities for students to share with peers content-related connections to their background knowledge. ◆ Occasionally makes connections between students' knowledge and experiences from home, community, or school and the new academic concepts. 	<p>The teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Engages in pre-assessment that provides all students the opportunity to share/document their funds of knowledge, prior knowledge, and academic knowledge about the topic or key content vocabulary. ◆ Purposefully listens/observes as students share/document their content-related connections to their background knowledge. ◆ Frequently integrates students' individual biographies, including what was learned about their knowledge and experiences from home, community, or school, with the new academic concepts. 	<p>The teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Engages in pre-assessments that provide all students the opportunity to share/document their funds of knowledge, prior knowledge, and academic knowledge about the topic and key content vocabulary. ◆ Uses insights gleaned from observation of students during pre-assessment activities to highlight student assets, support content connections, and build a com. of learners. ◆ Consistently integrates students' individual biographies, including what was learned about their knowledge/experiences from home, community, or school, with the new academic concepts and content vocabulary.

Biography-Driven Practices (BDP) Rubric

	Not Observed 0	Emerging 1	Developing 2	Enacting 3	Integrating 4
Challenging Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No accommodations for linguistic or academic levels. ◆ Makes no reference to lesson objectives. ◆ Includes activities with no standards or expectations. ◆ Makes no considerations for students' states of mind/affective filter. ◆ Provides no feedback on student performance. 	<p>Teacher instruction and strategy use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides minimal accommodations based on students' linguistic and academic levels. ◆ Includes verbally stated, but rarely written/ posted lesson objectives. ◆ Includes activities with vague standards/ expectations. ◆ Makes minimal considerations for students' states of mind/affective filter. ◆ Provides minimal feedback on student performance. 	<p>Teacher instruction and strategy use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides occasional accommodations based on students' linguistic and academic levels. ◆ Includes verbally stated and written/posted lesson objectives. ◆ Includes activities with clear standards/ expectations. ◆ Occasionally monitors students' states of mind/affective filter and adjusts instruction accordingly. ◆ Occasionally provides feedback on student performance. 	<p>Teacher instruction and strategy use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides frequent accommodations based on students' linguistic and academic levels. ◆ Includes content and language objectives that are verbally stated and written/posted. ◆ Includes challenging activities with clear standards/expectations. ◆ Frequently monitors students' states of mind/affective filter and adjusts instruction accordingly. ◆ Provides frequent feedback on student performance to confirm/disconfirm learning. 	<p>Teacher instruction and strategy use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Consistently accommodates based on students' individual biographies, including sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic dimensions. ◆ Includes content and language objectives that are verbally stated, written/ posted, and revisited throughout the lesson. ◆ Includes challenging activities that demonstrate skillful integration of multiple standards with clear expectations. ◆ Consistently monitors students' states of mind/affective filter and adjusts instruction accordingly. ◆ Uses meaningful formative assessment to provide consistent feedback on student performance in order to confirm/disconfirm learning.
Instructional Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Lecture predominates. ◆ Responds in ways that validate students. ◆ Conversation not on topic. ◆ Incorporates no revoicing of students' learning. ◆ Does not invite students to articulate their views/ judgments/processes. 	<p>With individuals and small groups of students, the teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Uses questioning to elicit student talk. ◆ Rarely responds in ways that promote students' higher-order thinking and individual connections from the known to the unknown. ◆ Uses BICS (social language) and/or CALP (academic language) to discuss the content/topic. ◆ Includes minimal revoicing of students' learning. ◆ Asks students to articulate their views/ judgments/processes. 	<p>With individuals and small groups of students, the teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Elicits student talk with questioning, listening, rephrasing. ◆ Occasionally responds in ways that promote students' higher-order thinking and individual connections from the known to the unknown. ◆ Provides occasional opportunities for academic talk, including use of key content vocabulary, with and among students. ◆ Includes occasional revoicing of students' learning. ◆ Occasionally asks students to articulate their views/ judgments/ processes and provide rationales. 	<p>With individuals and small groups of students, the teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Elicits student talk with questioning, listening, rephrasing, and explicit modeling. ◆ Frequently responds in ways that promote students' higher-order thinking and individual connections from the known to the unknown. ◆ Provides frequent opportunities for academic talk, including use of key content vocabulary, with and among students. ◆ Includes frequent revoicing of students' learning. ◆ Frequently asks students to articulate their views/judgments/ processes and provide rationales. 	<p>With individuals and small groups of students, the teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Promotes student talk about the content through student-led discussion and questioning. ◆ Responds in ways that support students' higher-order thinking, elaboration/ refinement of connections from the known to the unknown, and application beyond the classroom. ◆ Facilitates instructional conversations in which student academic talk and the use of key content vocabulary predominates. ◆ Includes consistent revoicing of students' learning that challenges students to expand upon or make deeper connections. ◆ Consistently asks students to articulate their views/judgments/processes and provide rationales.

Adapted from CREDE (1999) Standards Performance Continuum