

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS

Ideas from former students

Assessment One: Melba Kendrick. (Spanish II)

In my Spanish II class, my students will do an (Easter) Egg hunt around the school. The school becomes a city by making the hallways street names and the classrooms stores (La Heladería Smith, La Muebleria Cook etc.) Each student will work with a partner and have a map of the school. They will be given directions to find the Easter Egg within the school (city) on an index card. Students will follow the directions as they pretend to drive around the “city” and draw the directions on their map. Once students arrive at their location, students will get their egg and return to the class. Hint: The number on their egg must match the number on their index card. The first three groups of students back in the classroom with the correct egg will get a Chocolate bunny or a prize depending on the season. The students must turn in their maps with markings on it and will get a grade for following directions properly. Once everyone has returned (10-15 minutes), students will write directions from their destination store to the Spanish classroom. They may go in any direction they choose. Students will not have index cards to refer to when writing the directions from their destination store to the Spanish classroom. Note: While students are in the hallways, they wear a Spanish class badge and I also receive permission from the principal each time we do this activity/assessment.

Assessment Two: Barbara Underwood

With the unit on food, the students are asked to develop menus, create a role-playing situation in a restaurant that I videotape. Everything must meet the rubric requirements in order for them to receive their credit. At the end of the unit, we arrange a trip to a Mexican restaurant where they are asked to apply the things they have learned in a real-life situation. They must speak with the waiters, ask about the food, order the food and then ask for the bill in the L2. I arrange in advance with the restaurant for them to critique the students in their abilities, also. The waiters know that the students are only to speak in the L2 with them. After the trip to the restaurant, the students are asked to write a review of the meal. The students really enjoy the whole experience, also.

Assessment Three: Laura Droms

In the chapter on daily activities, they also include vocabulary for instruments. Therefore, the students participated in a Battle of the Bands. (This chapter included vocabulary for instruments.) In groups of four they had to come up with a name for a band, group members and the instruments played, three song titles, and a CD cover. Students had to work together to come to an agreement on celebrity band members or what instruments the students themselves would play if they chose to be the band members. Next, students presented their band to the class and the class voted for the best band. Some students even wrote short songs to give students a sample of what the “new CD” would offer. The students loved this activity, and it was an excellent opportunity for them to show their

creativity and use the new vocabulary. Some of the groups included “Los Zapatos Sucios,” “El Queso Viejo,” “La Sexta” (for sixth period), and “Los Ochos Locos.”

Assessment Four: Melyn Roberson (Beginning of year IB activity)

An authentic assessment I have incorporated in to my classroom is to use their own experiences to narrate in the past. In the fall when the students arrive, they are to have written an essay about their summer. During the first week of school, I use this information to establish their current proficiency in Spanish as a pretest and to teach them the IB rubric. They create questions to ask others and may use some of the ideas from the essay or use other information. As a small group they tape the discussion of their summer break. It is authentic because the context is real, it is their life and they are having a discussion where they both ask and answer questions in a natural way. I am not participating in the discussion and do not search for specific grammar skills or vocabulary but see what they can do with language.

Assessment Five: Svetla Dimova (IB-IV)

I recently gave an authentic, task-based assessment to my IB-IV class in which students had to read and reply to a newspaper ad submitted by a French beauty-salon chain company with stores in several French cities. The company was looking for a person with pharmaceutical education, experienced in working with clients, and willing to become in charge of the store management. One address was supplied, where according to a given code the received letters of application would be transmitted to the offices of the respective cities. The main goal of my assessment was to measure how well students can apply a culturally appropriate formal letter format: how to structure the letter, what kind of information to include, and what kind of vocabulary and style to use. In order to carry out the task successfully, students needed to understand the context: for their business letter to be relevant, they needed to identify and address the main points of the ad: education, experience and personal qualities, preferences for leadership position, preferences for one of the cities where this opportunity was available, and to whom and to which address to write.

I admit that this was quite a complicated task. All of them wrote in the appropriate format but exhibited different degrees of appropriate style and vocabulary use and concrete context understanding. The majority addressed fewer aspects than inferred. They either could not identify them, or they did not find necessary to address them. A crucial reason for a performance, lower than what would be normal for these particular students is the fact that they had limited time – 30 minutes. In an authentic situation, most likely they would have longer time to write such an important business letter. While being aware of this kind of discrepancy, I also must prepare them for a comprehensive, integrative, and timed exam, so I was willing to compromise some of the situation authenticity for the sake of getting them used to the timed exam conditions, accounting for the fact that they are still at the beginning of the process.

Luz said: I have asked individually my students to write a letter to students in a different block a letter introducing themselves by greeting, expressing their ages, describing physical features, explaining their school schedules, and preferences, likes and dislikes. Addressee students respond with another letter by addressing the same topics and asking something else at the end of the letter that implies a future letter with different topics such as how was your last summer or Christmas vacations?

Sandi said: One of the assessments that I did for a Span II class that I really liked and went really well was the creation of a TV show. The students had to create a television show that had many different aspects, but very much like a news show. Every student had a speaking part. It was videotaped in parts and then edited by me to make a complete show. We had a weather forecast, a news report of a robbery at a local gas station, (we actually went to the gas station where the “reporter” interviewed the owner (after a quick Spanish lesson for him, then we went to the police station to report on how they were coming with the crime), a reporter telling school news, etc. They even had to design a commercial. The kids had a ball doing it and the results were impressive. This was an end of the year assessment and the students had to speak in the past, present, and future and use a complexity of vocabulary learned throughout the year. I did this at a school in a very small community where the school environment was much more relaxed than it is where I am now. We could still do it, but going off-campus for the interviews would be probably impossible except as an after-school activity.

Ann said: An example of an authentic assessment that I did for four years was a final exam dinner for the French VIII class. The last six weeks of the semester included a unit on French cuisine. The final exam “dinner” took place during a 90 minute block in the morning during the students’ regular exam time. About 60 guests were invited. The guests included PTSA, staff from the high school, staff from the school district central office, school board members, representatives from our Partners in Education, and alumni from past French VIII classes. The students decorated the cafeteria and prepared the food at home the night before. At 7:30 am, they arrived to school to set up their work stations. Each student served 3 – 5 guests and some students served as water/red grape juice/white grape juice servers and other students served as Maitre d’s. Students were only allowed to speak French with the guests and with each other. During the six week long unit, students studied the five courses of French meals and they prepared recipes and presented/served to the class (hors-d’oeuvres, entrée, plat principal, cheese, dessert). We studied various historical aspects of French influences on cuisine – how the word “gout” came to be, how table manners developed, etc. We studied how to set the table. We studied what types of food and drinks went well together. In preparation for the final exam dinner, students voted on which recipes they liked and they created a menu for the guests which included how to say some simple expressions in French. Students were graded using a rubric that we discussed earlier in the semester. It included: Speaking French w/classmates, guests and teacher during the meal, proper hygiene and dress (hair tied

back, clean hands, white shirt, dark pants, safe shoes,), a welcoming, helpful and positive attitude, proper table setting, food prepared in accordance with the recipe, all food and materials ready 30 min. before opening of restaurant, etc. Every year that I have done this, students have filled out a questionnaire regarding the activity and how it could be improved. Their comments were that it was fun but really hard. They expressed that it is not an exam that they have to study for or can cram for the night before. They felt very proud of themselves for their accomplishment. As far as authentic assessment, this type of assessment clearly reflected what we had studied in the unit. The students spoke French 100% of the time (to my knowledge) to accomplish the task of serving their guests. They used their cooking skills, greetings, conversation in communicative and culturally appropriate and authentic ways.