



## AEBG ESL Crosswalk Meeting Notes

Monday, October 2, 2017

The purpose of this meeting was to develop a draft crosswalk between the English as a Second Language (ESL) Educational Functioning Levels (EFL) associated with the National Reporting System (NRS) and the descriptors for CB21 levels, which are associated with California community college levels below a transfer-level course. This crosswalk will help to establish equivalencies between measurable skills gains associated with scores on a federally-approved assessment test and the gains associated with moving from one level of the college basic skills sequence to the next, for the purpose of legislative reporting for the Adult Education Block Grant (AEBG). In addition, adult education consortia can leverage this crosswalk to support regional efforts to align curricula and determine placement methodologies.

The meeting was attended by ESL faculty from K-12 adult education providers, community college noncredit programs, and community college credit programs. In advance of the meeting, the group was given a draft crosswalk that had been prepared by a subject matter expert, as well as access to all of the source documents. The meeting was then spent discussing whether the draft alignment was accurate.

Several important issues surfaced in the preliminary discussion.

- 1) The EFLs describe the skills that students should have when they *enter* a course, whereas the CB21 levels identify the skills students have when they *complete* a course. When the EFLs were shifted down one level to reflect this difference, it revealed even greater gaps between the end of the K-12 adult education sequence and the community college offerings than had been recorded in prior crosswalks.
- 2) There is greater specificity for the CB21 descriptors than for the EFL descriptors, making it difficult to tell the nature of potential gaps in expected skills, as well as the intent of specific federal items. The group recommended that the discussion focus on high-level skills as a first step, with an emphasis on flagging places where alignment was not strong.
- 3) A second meeting should be held that compares specific competencies between the federal and California community college frameworks. However, this effort cannot proceed until the federal government releases new descriptors for the ESL EFLs. Once established, these standards could be compared to the detailed competencies created for the community college Common Assessment Initiative.
- 4) The curriculum in K-12 schools may not take the same approach as college courses. For example, K-12 schools tend to focus on building Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills that enable learners to be more successful in community and career contexts. Colleges tend to be oriented toward Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, in preparation for ongoing academic coursework. This may mean that students need additional support in acquiring skills that are specific to academic language when they transition to post-secondary education.

By the close the day, the group had established the following updated crosswalk between EFLs and CB21 levels:

EFL	CB21
Low Beginning ESL	CB21 H - Integrated ESL Low Beginning Literacy
	CB21 G - Integrated ESL High Beginning Literacy
High Beginning ESL	CB21 F - Integrated ESL Low Beginning
Low Intermediate ESL	CB21 E - Integrated ESL High Beginning
High Intermediate ESL	CB21 D - Integrated ESL Low Intermediate
Advanced ESL	CB21 C – Integrated ESL High Intermediate
	CB21 B - Integrated ESL Low Advanced
	CB21 A – Integrated ESL Advanced

However, the group cautioned that CB21 levels do not align directly with the EFL levels, particularly for foundational skills. Expected reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills are generally higher in the CB21 rubric across all levels. For example:

- CB21 Level H includes verbal and non-verbal strategies to communicate that not present in the Beginning ESL Literacy descriptors.
- CB21 Level G describes more advanced reading and writing skills than Low Beginning ESL, such as using vocabulary and grammar to interpret sentences and composing sentences about personal biographical information.
- CB21 Level F includes a greater focus on multi-step directions than High Beginning ESL and includes the ability to read short, simple narrative paragraphs.
- CB21 Level E includes distinguishing between main and supporting ideas, using syntactic clues to identify relationships in a reading passage, and predicting meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary, which are not covered in Low Intermediate ESL; the listening and speaking skills are generally more aligned (except for the inclusion in CB21 of phone conversations).
- CB21 Level D was closer to High Intermediate ESL, although it generally required more in-depth reading skills.
- CB21 Level C included skills higher than those in Low Advanced, such as analyzing authentic prose, and comparing and contrasting main and supporting ideas in texts.
- CB21 Level B continued the trend, with higher-level skills such as developing an awareness of the need to evaluate text credibility not found in Advanced ESL.

The group recommended that specific attention be paid to examining potential gaps at two points:

- Low Beginning ESL and CB21 Levels G & H: potential differences in instructional approaches to supporting foundational literacy means that specific standards/competencies need to be examined more closely to determine equivalency.
- CB21 Level C: this course emerged as a key point at which students moved from developing fundamental language skills to entering a specific academic pathway (whether CTE or not);



therefore articulation agreements should take into account whether students with High Intermediate ESL scores have the appropriate preparation for specific college majors.

Finally, the group noted that some core skills were missing from the CB21 descriptors that go beyond core ESL skills, including digital literacy (such as working with a learning management system), college knowledge (such as how to use a textbook or expectations about turning in assignments), and noncognitive skills (such as appropriate standards for classroom behavior). Given that these competencies are as critical to student success as are language proficiency and content knowledge, they will also be important to assess.