



Peralta Community College District
Berkeley City College, College of Alameda, Laney College, Merritt College

ESL Writing Assessment Validation Report

Submitted to

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Introduction

The four colleges in the Peralta Community College District (PCCD) utilize an approved locally managed ESL writing assessment instrument to place students into ESL writing courses. For placement into ESL listening and speaking and grammar courses, the colleges use ACT COMPASS ESL tests, which are approved second-party assessment instruments. In summer 2014, the Peralta ESOL Advisory Council (PEAC) modified the placement rubric of the ESL writing assessment instrument to be aligned with a newly adopted ESL curriculum sequence. At the same time, the prompts used in the writing assessment were also revised based on input from test proctors, readers and faculty, with the goal that all prompts be of similar complexity, free of bias, and to involve comparisons. This process was led by faculty, with input and facilitation from the Office of Institutional Research.

This report describes the studies that were conducted in summer and fall 2014 to assess the reliability and validity of the new writing prompts and placement rubric in accordance with the procedures for local districts that manage a direct performance assessment instrument. Specifically, this report provides evidence addressing prompt bias, interprompt agreement, content-validity of the placement rubric, interscorer reliability of the scoring rubric, and consequential validity of the placement process. This report also identifies points where further work is needed, and plans for addressing those needs.

Background on PCCD ESL Curriculum

The new, accelerated ESL core curriculum is a four level program (High Beginning, Intermediate, High Intermediate, and Advanced) for the subject areas of reading and writing, listening and speaking, and grammar. The goals of the new curriculum are 1) to support students to improve their ability to speak and understand both oral and written English, and 2) to develop reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. The courses for reading and writing are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: PCCD ESL Reading and Writing Courses

Level	Course
High Beginning	285A/B
Intermediate	222A/B
High Intermediate	223A/B
Advanced	52A/B

Evaluation of Writing Prompts for Bias

In summer 2014, the PEAC created new prompts for the ESL writing assessment test as well as a new format. The writing assessment test is a timed 30 minutes test in which students choose one of two questions to answer in an essay. They are asked to give specific reasons and examples to explain their opinion (See Appendix A for the test format).

A committee composed of ESL faculty, Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) faculty, and others described below reviewed the new writing prompts for possible cultural or linguistic bias, insensitivity, or offensiveness (see Appendix B for a list of the prompts). The committee composition was diverse in terms of ethnicity and gender, reflecting the student population at PCCD. Two committee members were also selected from DSPS for expertise in student disabilities. Table 2 describes the composition of the nine reviewers.

Table 2: Reviewers of Prompts for Bias

Ethnicity	Gender	Expertise
African American	Female	DSPS instructor (A)
African American	Female	ESL student (B)
Asian	Female	Researcher (C)
Asian	Male	Director of Asian & Pacific American Student Success Program (D)
Hispanic	Male	DSPS instructor (E)
White	Female	3 ESL instructor (F, G, H)
White	Male	ESL instructor (I)

Each reviewer individually evaluated the 11 prompts for evidence of any kind of bias, insensitivity, or offensiveness. They were asked to comment on any prompts that may pose a problem. Table 3 describes the comments by the reviewers on the 11 writing prompts. After a discussion about the comments for each prompt, the committee decided that the 5 prompts (Prompts 7 to 11) that used too high a level of grammatical sophistication, or were deemed potentially insensitive, should be excluded. Although comments concerning Prompts 3, 5, and 6 involved possible lack of experience or clarity of concept for some students, they were retained because they were not perceived as biased, and students would have a choice of two prompts. That is, if a student does not have experience with or opinion about one prompt, then he or she can choose the other prompt to write about (see bottom of Appendix A for an example). As suggested by the Chancellor's office, giving students a choice in prompts was considered a good resolve to issues of possible bias in the prompts. Thus, 6 prompts (Prompts 1 to 6) that were judged to be generally free of cultural or linguistic bias were retained.

Table 3: Reviewer Comments

Prompt	Comments
1	
2	
3	D: "Some students may not have experienced life in a small town and may experience a disadvantage compared to those who have both experiences."
4	
5	D: "Some students may not have experienced life in another country to create a reasonable comparison response."
6	B: "It is not clear what my family wants? They want from me or what they want in general."
7	F: "How much can anyone say about eating in a restaurant vs. eating at home?" G: "It's not a prompt that I see much to write about."
8	F: "Requires a lot of vocabulary and fairly difficult grammar."
9	F: "Students may not have opinions about a day or a night job."
10	G: "Assumes students have experience with computers"; "a great digital divide affect many of our students, particularly older students" H: "Computer question might be challenging for older students."
11	G: "Potentially insensitive for students who have lost their parents."

Placement Rubric and Content Validity

A representative sample of students from all levels of ESL classes was chosen during the summer 2014 term to write sample essays using the new prompts. Each student chose one prompt from a set of two prompts. The six prompts were arranged into 12 orderings such that each prompt was included twice, once in the first position and once in the second position (see bottom of Appendix A for the format), as a means to check for preference associated with the order of presentation. These sample essays were used to establish content validity, interscorer reliability, and interprompt reliability.

These data informed the modification of the writing placement rubric which was revised by the PEAC to accord with the new ESL curriculum sequence. The content-related validity of the placement rubric was conducted by a representative committee of 5 ESL instructors. Content validity was established by ensuring a direct relationship between the writing placement guide and the district-wide agreed upon objectives, course prerequisite skills, and writing skill expectations for the reading and writing courses (see Appendix C for the placement rubric). The placement rubric consists of a 1 to 6 scale, corresponding to the curriculum as shown in the table 4.

Table 4: Placement Rubric for ESL Reading and Writing Courses

Score	Course	Description
1	Refer to Adult School	Refer to Adult School
2	ESL 285A	High Beginning Reading and Writing
3	ESL 222A	Intermediate Reading and Writing
4	ESL 223A	High Intermediate Reading and Writing
5	ESL 52A	Advanced Reading and Writing
6	Refer to English	Refer to English Department for Placement

A norming session was conducted with 5 ESL instructors, who rated 20 sample essays to evaluate the descriptors of the placement rubric and then discussed, revised, and refined the levels until they were completely satisfied. Scoring of the writing samples was based upon a holistic reading; thus, descriptors of each placement level reflect the dominant characteristics of the writing sample at each of these levels. Specifically, the committee focused on the overall content and four specific areas: addressing prompt, organization, development of ideas, and clarity. They also identified anchor papers for each level.

Interscorer Reliability

To assess interscorer reliability, a 3-reader system was used. Specifically, after the three faculty readers were trained on the new placement rubric, two readers independently rated a set of 50 randomly selected essays (see below for the description of the training session). If the two readers did not agree on a score for a sample essay, then the third reader resolved the inconsistency between the first two readers. For example, if two scores out of three were the same, a valid score had been reached for the sample. If three different scores were given by three readers, then the three readers had to conference and reach a consensus on a score. Rater agreement was calculated by correlating the ratings from the two independent readers. The interscorer reliability coefficient was .89.

After establishing interscorer reliability with the new placement rubric, a training session was conducted with 20 potential new readers. During the session, the placement rubric was reviewed and discussed. The two trainers, who participated in the previous norming session, verbally went over the characteristics for placement at each level and discussed the 5 anchor papers (Adult School, High Beginning, Intermediate, High Intermediate, and Advanced). The participants examined labeled writing examples at each level and then discussed how each example related to the placement rubric. They identified the characteristics of that example that prevented it being scored at the next higher level or the next lower one. Each participant then received identical unlabeled examples at each level to score. Results were charted for all participants to examine and discrepancies were discussed in the whole group. Then, groups of three participants did simulated placement sessions using the three-reader system, and continued to work until they reached agreement 90% of the time.

Interprompt Agreement

Because multiple prompts will be used in the ESL writing assessment, we examined interprompt agreement. We were unable to conduct double testing of students to assess equivalent-form reliability of the prompts, thus we conducted a preliminary interprompt agreement with the ratings of the 50 essay samples. These essays were not ideal for assessing interprompt agreement because the students were not randomly assigned a prompt and we did not have an equal number of students for each prompt. Table 5 describes the percentage of students who chose each prompt. Of the 50 essays, 3 students did not choose a prompt to address because of low English proficiency.

Table 5: Students' Choice of Prompt

Prompt	Percent Chosen
1	8%
2	20%
3	14%
4	16%
5	20%
6	16%
None*	6%
	100%

Note: * Low English proficiency students who did not choose a prompt. The readers had assigned them to adult school.

Ten students chose Prompt 2 and another ten chose Prompt 5. We attempted to assess interprompt agreement with these two prompts because they had the most number of students. However, as can be seen in Table 6, although the prompt distributions show some overlap, there are too few students to obtain a reliable result. Thus, we are conducting a follow-up study to establish equivalency of prompts in the spring term.

Table 6: Interprompt Agreement

Prompt	n	Rating					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
2	10	20%	20%	30%	20%	0%	10%
5	10	10%	30%	20%	30%	10%	0%

Consequential Validity

In fall 2014, a pilot consequential validity study was conducted to evaluate the placement accuracy of the ESL writing assessment process. During the sixth week of classes, a survey was administered to students and instructors in the five reading and writing ESL courses at Berkeley City College (see Appendices D and E for the student and instructor surveys). Students were asked about their satisfaction with their placement into their ESL reading and writing courses by indicating whether their placement was the right level, too difficult, or too easy. Instructors were asked to assess whether each first time student was appropriately placed in the course. Specifically, they were asked, “Please indicate the appropriateness of each student’s placement by completing the following statement. This student is:

1. Very overprepared, definitely should be in the next level.
2. Somewhat overprepared, perhaps should be in the next level.
3. Well prepared, should pass with reasonable effort.
4. Somewhat underprepared, perhaps should be in previous level.
5. Very underprepared, definitely should be in previous level.”

For the instructor ratings, ratings of 2, 3, and 4 were combined as “adequately prepared” (appropriate placement), 1 as “overprepared”, and 5 as “underprepared”.

Only the students who took the writing assessment test at Berkeley City College were included in evaluating the appropriateness of the placement. Enrollment records were matched with assessment data. Because Berkeley City College typically has high level ESL students, only the two higher level reading and writing ESL courses were offered in fall 2014. Approximately 131 students were enrolled in 5 reading and writing ESL courses (see Table 7). Of these, 79 first time students took the writing assessment test. Most of the other students in the courses were continuing in the ESL sequence and did not take the placement test or they took the placement test outside Peralta colleges.

Instructors were asked to rate all first time students in their classes. First time students were chosen because they were most likely to have recently taken the ESL writing assessment test. Student self-ratings were obtained from the students in attendance on the day of the survey. The instructor and student surveys were conducted in class using paper surveys.

Table 7: Description of Participating ESL Courses

Courses	Sections Surveyed	Enrolled	Instructor Ratings	Student Ratings
High Intermediate Reading and Writing (ESL 223A)	2	55	33	25
Advanced Reading and Writing (ESL 52A)	3	76	46	29
Total	5	131	79	54

Students were generally very satisfied with their placement (See Table 8). Both levels of ESL classes had a higher than 75% agreement rate that the course was the right level, 84% for ESL 223A and 93% for ESL 52A. Overall, only 4% of the students felt they were not qualified for the course (too difficult), while 7% felt they were overqualified (too easy). Slightly more students felt they were overqualified for ESL 223A (12%).

Table 8: Student Rating of Placement Accuracy

Courses		Not Qualified	Qualified	Overqualified	Total
High Intermediate Reading and Writing (ESL 223A)	n	1	21	3	25
	%	4.0	84.0	12.0	100
Advanced Reading and Writing (ESL 52A)	n	1	27	1	29
	%	3.4	93.1	3.4	100
Total	n	2	47	4	54
	%	3.7	88.9	7.4	100

Note: For the two ESL 223A classes, the qualified ratings were 81.8% and 85.7%. For the three ESL 52A classes, the qualified ratings ranged from 87.9% to 100%.

As can be seen in Table 9, instructors were generally very favorable in the placement of the students. Both levels of ESL classes had rates higher than 75% agreement that the students were appropriately placed, 94% for ESL 223A and 96% for ESL 52A. Overall, only 5% of the students were thought to be underprepared and no student was considered overprepared.

Table 9: Instructor Rating of Placement Adequacy

Courses		Underprepared	Adequately Prepared	Overprepared	Total
High Intermediate Reading and Writing (ESL 223A)	n	2	31	0	33
	%	6.1	93.9	0	100
Advanced Reading and Writing (ESL 52A)	n	2	44	0	46
	%	4.3	95.7	0	100
Total	n	4	75	0	79
	%	5.1	94.9	0	100

Note: For the two ESL 223A classes, the adequately prepared ratings were 89.5% and 100%. For the three ESL 52A classes, the adequately prepared ratings ranged from 90% to 100%.

Both instructors and students evidence high levels of satisfaction with the placement process. However, because these sample sizes are small and only the two higher level courses were evaluated, we will conduct follow-up studies with larger sample of students and with all four levels of ESL classes in the spring term.

Disproportionate Impact

Disproportionate impact could not be assessed because of the small sample size, restricted range of classes, and only one college was included in the pilot study. In order to build a sample sufficiently large enough to support basic statistical inference for each subgroup, the Office of Institutional Research will be conducting consequential validity surveys in ESL writing courses each term until an adequate sample size is reached. Once we obtain a large enough sample we will apply the “80% rule” on data disaggregated by gender, age, disability status, primary ethnicity, and possibly other significant subgroups within the ESL population who may be adversely affected by the placement process (such as East African immigrants).

Conclusion

The findings from the studies suggest that 1) the new prompts are generally free of bias and the choice format may be a good resolve to issues of possible bias in the prompts, and 2) the revised placement rubric appears effective in placing students in the appropriate level of ESL reading and writing courses.

The results also indicate a need for further studies to assess equivalent-form reliability of the prompts, consequential validity with all four levels of ESL reading and writing courses, and disproportionate impact of the placement process. We are implementing plans to address these key issues. To establish equivalent-form reliability additional tests will be proctored and scored

according to the rubric drafted by the PEAC. The PEAC will be presented with the findings and, if necessary, the district will convene a team to address deficiencies that are found. Also, beginning in spring 2015 we will conduct a consequential validity survey of ESL students across all levels of ESL and in all colleges and combine results from fall 2014. If the resulting sample size is still not large enough to warrant conclusions in a study examining disproportionate impact, then additional surveys will be conducted in fall 2015.

Finally, we look forward to receiving feedback from the assessment working group regarding the information provided in this report, and shaping our work plan for the coming year accordingly.

Appendix A: Writing Assessment Instrument

Name			
	Last (family)	First	Middle

Student ID #									
---------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Date		/		/	
-------------	--	---	--	---	--

- REFER to ENGL
- ESL 52A (ADV)
- ESL 223A (HIGH INT)
- ESL 222A (INT)
- ESL 285A (HIGH BEG)
- ADULT SCHOOL

Peralta Community College District
English for Speakers of Other Languages
Writing Placement Test

Directions:

Please do not turn this page until the test-giver tells you what to do.

On the next page, you will see two questions. Choose ONE of the two questions and answer it in an essay. In your essay, give specific reasons and examples to explain your opinion.

You have 30 minutes.

Please do not talk or use a dictionary. You may use a pencil or pen.

Do your best and write as much as you can.

Good luck!

Please answer ONE of these questions in an essay.

#1

Which do you think is more important, love or money?

OR

Which do you think is better, life now or life 100 years ago?

Appendix B: Writing Prompts

Prompt 1: Who do you think has a harder life, men or women?

Prompt 2: Which do you think is better, life now or life 100 years ago?

Prompt 3: Which do you think is a better place to live, a big city or a small town?

Prompt 4: Which do you think is more important, love or money?

Prompt 5: Which do you think is easier, life in your country or life in the United States?

Prompt 6: Which do you think is more important, doing what you want or doing what your family wants?

Prompt 7: Which do you think is better, eating in a restaurant or eating at home?

Prompt 8: Which do you think is better, a friend who is different from you or a friend who is the same as you?

Prompt 9: Which do you think is better, a day job or a night job?

Prompt 10: Which do you think is better, life with computers or life without computers?

Prompt 11: Who do you think has a better life, you or your parents?

Appendix C: Writing Placement Rubric

Peralta Community College District ESOL Writing Placement Rubric

Developed June 2014 by Peralta ESOL Advisory Council

	Refer to English Category 2	Advanced Reading/Writing ESL 52A	High Intermediate Reading/Writing ESL 223A	Intermediate Reading/Writing ESL 222A	High Beginning Reading/Writing ESL 285A	Refer to Adult School
Addressing Prompt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may address prompt with a sense of purpose and audience goes beyond the concrete may address other perspectives/ make concessions 		understands and provides an intelligible, extended response to prompt		understands and provides an intelligible response to prompt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> doesn't address prompt seems not to understand task
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> main points clear and distinct paragraphs have clear internal organization uses transitional techniques effectively 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> main points mostly clear paragraphs have some internal organization 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> main points unclear may be "stream-of-consciousness" 	none
Development	supports points with clear, specific, and sufficient examples and details			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts to support points support may lack clarity or relevance 	points minimally or not supported	
Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strong control of structures and specific vocabulary errors do not interfere with meaning does not require rereading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sentence structure and vocabulary sufficient to express meaning some sentence variety may require occasional rereading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some effective sentence structure and vocabulary may require some rereading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limited sentence structure and vocabulary requires rereading 	not comprehensible	

Refer to English Category 1: regardless of essay writing skill, writer has idiomatic, fluent English; if errors, similar to fluent English speaker errors.

Appendix D: Consequential Validity Survey – Student Survey

PCCD **ESL** Placement Validation Student Survey - Fall 2014

To be completed by the student

Please take a few minutes to provide feedback on this course. Your judgment will help Peralta CCD to improve course placement processes.

Date _____ Birthdate _____

Name _____

Course Section (circle one): 50A 52A 215A 216A 217A 222A 223A 232A 233A
283A 284A 285A Other _____

1. Which **ONE** of the following statements is most true about your placement in this course?
 This course is the right level for me.
 This course is too difficult for me.
 This course is too easy for me.
2. How did you get placed into this course?
 Placement test at one of the Peralta colleges (Alameda, Berkeley, Laney, Merritt)
 Placement test outside Peralta colleges
 Completed prerequisite course
 Successfully challenged the prerequisite
 Other _____
3. If you took the placement test at one of the Peralta colleges, did you prepare for the test by studying?
 Yes No
4. To what extent are personal reasons (illness, job/family responsibilities, personal problems, etc.) interfering with your performance in this course?
 Not at all
 Somewhat
 Very much
5. Do you have enough time to meet the studying/homework demands of this course?
 Yes No

Appendix E: Consequential Validity Survey – Instructor Survey

PCCD Placement Validation Survey - Fall 2014

To be completed by the instructor

Date _____ Class section _____

Instructor's name _____

As part of the revalidation process for Peralta Community Colleges' assessment placement tool, we need data from you about the students in your class.

Please indicate the appropriateness of each student's placement by completing the following statement. This student is:

- 1 = Very overprepared, definitely should be in the next level.
- 2 = Somewhat overprepared, perhaps should be in the next level.
- 3 = Well prepared, should pass with reasonable effort.
- 4 = Somewhat underprepared, perhaps should be in previous level.
- 5 = Very underprepared, definitely should be in previous level.

Student Name	SID	Rating



Peralta Community College District
Berkeley City College, College of Alameda, Laney College, Merritt College

ESL Writing Assessment Validation Report Addendum

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This addendum addresses two concerns that were identified in the preliminary report and approval status in December 2014. The first issue involved content validity of the new placement rubric and the second issue concerned interprompt reliability. We are providing additional information for both issues.

1. Content Validity

Please describe the PEAC members who participated in the modification of scoring rubrics. Was it the group of 5 ESL instructors mentioned in the “Placement Rubric and Content Validity” section?

Yes, the five PEAC (Peralta ESOL Advisory Council) members who participated in the modification of scoring rubric were all experienced ESL instructors, including two chairs of ESL departments. These instructors have extensive experience teaching the four levels of ESL courses.

Please provide discussions on the relationships between scoring rubrics and the specific pre-course expectations (i.e., prerequisite skills) for each course.

PEAC members drafted a summary of the relationships between scoring rubrics and prerequisite skills for each course. A detailed description is provided in Appendix A.

2. Reliability: Interprompt reliability

Additional data were collected to assess interprompt reliability of the 6 prompts that were judged to be generally free of cultural or linguistic bias. Berkeley City College and Laney College were chosen because they are comprised of fairly diverse populations of ESL students and we wanted to evaluate interprompt reliability with students with varying levels of proficiency in English.

Each student chose one prompt from a set of two prompts. The 6 prompts were arranged into 12 orderings such that each prompt was included twice, once in the first position and once in the second position, as a means to check for preference associated with the order of presentation.

187 students from Berkeley City College and 180 students from Laney College were included in the preliminary study. Students at Berkeley City College (mean = 25.9 years) were younger than students at Laney College (mean = 33.8 years, see Table 1). In addition, at Berkeley City College a majority of students were under the age of 25, whereas a majority of students were 30 years or older at Laney College.

Table 1: Age Distribution

	Berkeley	Laney
Mean Age	25.9 years	33.8 years
18 to 24 years	51.9%	22.1%
30 and Older	27.1%	57.2%

Furthermore, the distribution of the rating scores across the prompts differed for the two colleges. As can be seen in Table 2, a greater percentage of students at Berkeley City College received higher level scores in comparison to students at Laney College, whereas a higher percentage of students at Laney College received lower level scores in comparison to students at Berkeley City College.

Table 2: Distribution of Rating Scores across Prompts

Rating Scores	Berkeley	Laney
50	8.6%	0.6%
40	35.8%	3.3%
30	38.0%	10.0%
20	14.4%	26.7%
10	2.7%	38.3%
0	0.5%	21.1%

Finally, students at the two colleges evidenced differential preferences for the 6 prompts. For example, as can be seen in Table 3, more students at Laney College ($n = 39$) chose to address Prompt 2 compared to students at Berkeley City College ($n = 20$). In contrast, more students at Berkeley City College ($n = 39$) chose to address Prompt 6 compared to those at Laney College ($n = 10$).

Table 3: Prompt Choice by College

	Berkeley	Laney
Prompt 1	18	16
Prompt 2	20	39
Prompt 3	34	44
Prompt 4	33	34
Prompt 5	43	37
Prompt 6	39	10

Given these differences between the two colleges, interprompt reliability was examined separately for each college.

Berkeley City College

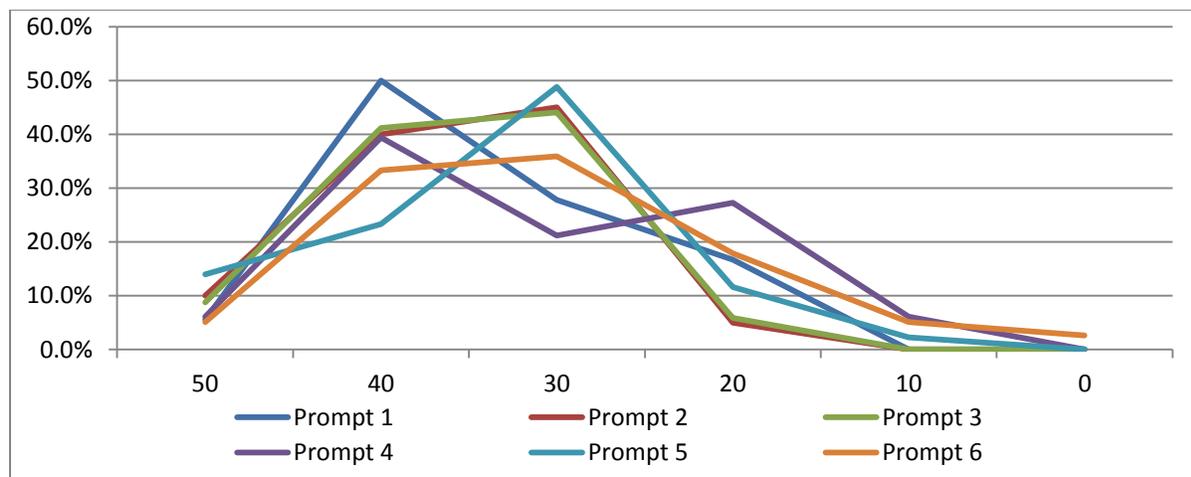
Table 4 displays the distribution of the rating scores for each prompt for Berkeley City College. Equivalence of distributions was assessed with a Chi-square test, which was not significant, $X^2(25) = 26.24, p = .40$.

Table 4: Distribution of Rating Scores by Prompt for Berkeley City College

	Scores						n
	50	40	30	20	10	0	
Prompt 1	5.6%	50.0%	27.8%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	18
Prompt 2	10.0%	40.0%	45.0%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20
Prompt 3	8.8%	41.2%	44.1%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	34
Prompt 4	6.1%	39.4%	21.2%	27.3%	6.1%	0.0%	33
Prompt 5	14.0%	23.3%	48.8%	11.6%	2.3%	0.0%	43
Prompt 6	5.1%	33.3%	35.9%	17.9%	5.1%	2.6%	39

Although the scoring distributions of the 6 prompts were not statistically significant, a graph of the distributions suggests a lack of overlap among the prompts (see Figure 1). For example, Prompts 1 and 5 do not exhibit similar distributions at the higher scoring levels.

Figure 1: Distribution of Rating Scores by Prompt for Berkeley City College



Laney College

Table 5 displays the distribution of the rating scores for each prompt for Laney College (see Figure 2 for a graphic display). Equivalence of distributions was assessed with a Chi-square test,

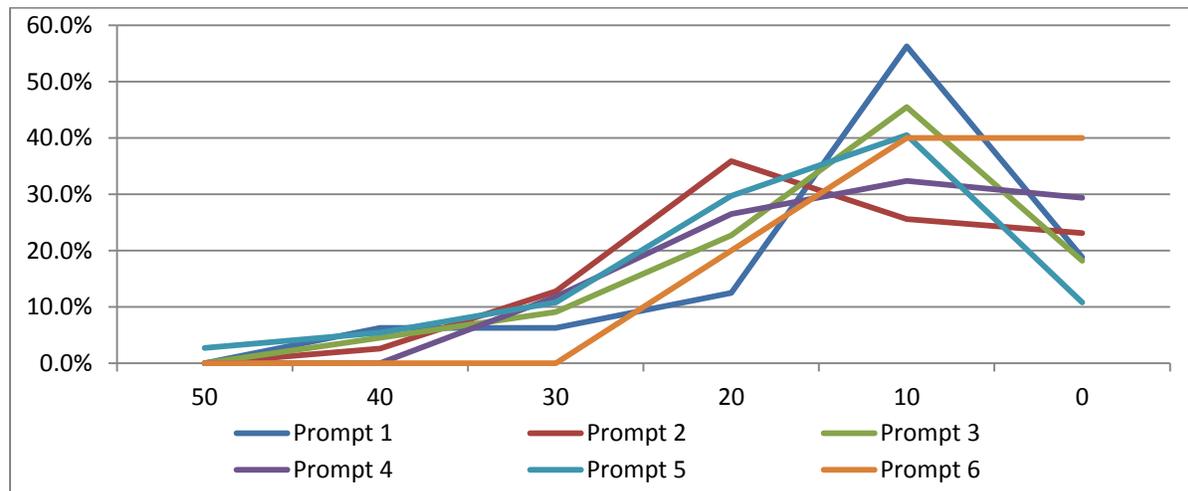
which was not significant, $\chi^2(25) = 20.07, p = .74$. Interestingly, fewer students chose Prompt 6 in comparison to the other prompts.

Table 5: Distribution of Rating Scores by Prompt for Laney College

	Scores						n
	50	40	30	20	10	0	
Prompt 1	0.0%	6.3%	6.3%	12.5%	56.3%	18.8%	16
Prompt 2	0.0%	2.6%	12.8%	35.9%	25.6%	23.1%	39
Prompt 3	0.0%	4.5%	9.1%	22.7%	45.5%	18.2%	44
Prompt 4	0.0%	0.0%	11.8%	26.5%	32.4%	29.4%	34
Prompt 5	2.7%	5.4%	10.8%	29.7%	40.5%	10.8%	37
Prompt 6	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	10

Similar to Berkeley City College, although the scoring distributions of the 6 prompts were not statistically significant, a graph of the distributions suggests a lack of overlap among the prompts (see Figure 2). For example, Prompt 1 does not exhibit a similar distribution at the lower scoring levels.

Figure 2: Distribution of Rating Scores by Prompt for Laney College



These results suggested that the scoring distributions for the 6 prompts were not statistically different for the two colleges. However, examination of the two graphs suggests that the scoring distributions of the 6 prompts may not be equivalent. Thus, a new study will be conducted in summer and fall 2015 to assess interprompt equivalence at Berkeley City College and Laney College. In the new study, each student will be given only one prompt to respond to (not a pair to choose from), and the prompts will be randomly assigned to the students. We may also consider excluding Prompt 6 in the future because fewer lower English proficiency students at Laney College choose this prompt.

Appendix A

Peralta Community College District (PCCD) ESL Writing Assessment Tool

This appendix provides an explanation of how the scoring rubric was developed for the ESL Writing Assessment and how it relates to the prerequisite skills associated with each course in the ESL reading and writing sequence. The rubric was developed by a group of senior ESL faculty and groups standards under four categories for each course:

1. Addressing the Prompt
2. Organization
3. Development
4. Clarity

The following description of standards was provided by an ESL faculty member who led the development of the assessment.

The tool is a rubric assessment of 30 minutes of unprepared and unaided student writing, used to assist in accurate placement of new students in PCCD reading and writing classes.

The writing placement tool is a kind of snapshot that seeks to predict, on the basis of a brief exercise supervised by classified staff, a student's likelihood of success in a much more rich and demanding class setting. The assessment must rather inferences between a student's performance on a task in a testing situation and his or her likely progress in learning related tasks in a classroom situation.

In the following pages, each of the levels for which new students are assessed in the PCCD system are analyzed with the following information:

- Rubric requirements for placement in the level.
- Related student performance objectives from the course outline of the prerequisite course.
- Related content from the course outline of the course that the student will enter.
- Comments explaining the connections between the placement rubric and the relevant course outline information.

Refer to English Department Assessment for possible placement in English 1A

(1) Addressing the Prompt

Rubric requirements:

- may address prompt with a sense of purpose and audience
- goes beyond the concrete
- may address other perspectives/ make concessions

Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 52B:

- develop essays ... which demonstrate critical reading skills and the ability to analyze expository prose

Content of the target course, English 1A:

- analysis of audience and purpose
- distinguishing between fact and inference, evaluating evidence, and recognizing common fallacies

Discussion: A student who is able to “develop essays” based on “critical reading skills” will be able to fully comprehend the assessment prompt and produce an extended and organized response to it. The ability show “a sense of purpose and audience” demonstrates readiness for the emphasis on this topic in English 1A. A student who “goes beyond the concrete” and “[addresses] other perspectives and [makes] concessions” is ready for the 1A critical analysis skills of “distinguishing between fact and inference, evaluating evidence, and recognizing common fallacies.”

(2) Organization

Rubric requirements:

- main points clear and distinct
- paragraphs have clear internal organization
- uses transitional techniques effectively

Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 52B:

- develop essays ... which demonstrate critical reading skills and the ability to analyze expository prose
- write effective introductory and concluding paragraphs

Content of the target course, English 1A:

- analysis of various structures employed in arguments

Discussion: Essay development of any kind, as required for completion of ESL 52B, implies an ability to identify distinct points, organize points into paragraphs and use appropriate transitional techniques, as required by the rubric for placement in English 1A. The ability to write effective introductions and conclusions, a requirement for completion of the prerequisite course, will probably result in organization with an introduction and conclusion in the student’s assessment writing. These organizational skills prepare the student for analysis and use of structures used in arguments, a topic stressed in English 1A.

(3) Development

Rubric requirements:

- supports points with clear, specific, and sufficient examples and details

Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 52B:

- develop essays ... which demonstrate critical ... skills

Content of the target course, English 1A:

- various structures employed in arguments, distinguishing between fact and inference, evaluating evidence, and recognizing common fallacies

Discussion: This component of the assessment rubric assesses the student’s ability to develop and support points with details and examples. Although *quantity* of writing per se cannot be included on an assessment rubric because some students may write a great deal

without writing well, there is nonetheless a correlation between development and essay length as we go up the levels. At this advanced level, a student whose essay-writing and critical thinking skills are ready for English 1A can probably fill at least two or three handwritten pages with details and examples to support his or her points, demonstrating readiness for the English 1A stress on structuring arguments and applying critical thinking skills.

(4) Clarity

<p>Rubric requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong control of structures and specific vocabulary • errors do not interfere with meaning • does not require rereading
<p>Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 52B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate syntactic variety • use appropriate college-level diction
<p>Content of the target course, English 1A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sentence logic, development and style

Discussion: This is actually the area in which the student who is ready for English 1A is clearly distinguished from a student who will be placed in ESL 52A. Although non-native speakers of English are a part of any college student population in California, students who enter English are expected to express themselves clearly and with vocabulary adequate to their topic. The “syntactic variety” and “college-level diction” referred to in the objectives for ESL 52B mean exactly this; an ability to choose and use appropriate structures and vocabulary for the topic at hand. Skills in this area prepare the student for the more advanced treatment of “sentence logic, development and style” that is featured in English 1A.

Recommend ESL 52A

(1) Addressing the Prompt

<p>Rubric requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may address prompt with a sense of purpose and audience • goes beyond the concrete • may address other perspectives/ make concessions
<p>Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 223B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare and analyze multiple perspectives on a complex issue at an advanced ESL level • distinguish fact from opinion, content from own response at an advanced level
<p>Content of the target course, ESL 52 A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing to a specific audience • strategies for writing successful in-class timed essays

Discussion: A student who is able to “compare and analyze multiple perspectives on a complex issue” and distinguish fact from opinion, content from own response” at the ESL 223B level is likely to produce writing on the assessment tool which “goes beyond the concrete.” Such a student is prepared for the topic of writing for a specific audience, which is addressed in ESL 52A, especially if s/he can already “address the prompt with a sense of purpose and audience.”

(2) Organization

<p>Rubric requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main points clear and distinct • paragraphs have clear internal organization • uses transitional techniques effectively
<p>Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 223B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compose essays and narratives in a variety of rhetorical modes at an advanced ESL level • use connectors, logical structures and transition signals to connect ideas at an advanced ESL level
<p>Content of the target course, ESL 52A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thesis development and support • organizational strategies • using a variety of cohesive devices including transitional adverbs, transitional phrases, pronouns, and repetition of key terms

Discussion: The ability to produce clear and distinct points, organized paragraphs and use transitional techniques is based on the practice with writing in different rhetorical modes that is an objective for ESL 223B. This skill prepares the student for further work on thesis development, organizational strategies, and use of more advanced transitional techniques in ESL 52A.

(3) Development

<p>Rubric requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports points with clear, specific, and sufficient examples and details
<p>Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 223B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compose essays and narratives in a variety of rhetorical modes at an advanced ESL level
<p>Content of the target course, ESL 52A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thesis development and support • using a variety of cohesive devices including transitional adverbs, transitional phrases, pronouns, and repetition of key terms

Discussion: The ability to support points with “clear, specific and sufficient examples and details” is also based on the practice with writing in different rhetorical modes that is an objective for ESL 223B. This skill prepares the student for further work on thesis development and support and use of more advanced transitional techniques in ESL 52A.

(4) Clarity

<p>Rubric requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sentence structure and vocabulary sufficient to express meaning • some sentence variety • may require occasional rereading
<p>Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 223B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use high intermediate English grammar structures, including active and passive voice, transition words to produce complex and compound sentences, and various kinds of clauses and phrases
<p>Content of the target course, ESL 52A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using an adequate range of vocabulary with only occasional errors of word form, choice or usage which do not obscure meaning • using a variety of sentence types including phrasal modifiers and complex sentences, with few errors in agreement, tense, aspect, number word order/function

Discussion: The most striking difference between a student placed in ESL 52A and a student who may be ready for English 1A is the frequency of non-native errors in syntax and vocabulary that will be found in assessment writing produced by the student placed in ESL 52A. Such a student will use grammar and transition structures taught in the prerequisite course, ESL 223B, including “active and passive voice, transition words to produce complex and compound sentences, and various kinds of clauses and phrases.” However, these structures may be used with errors that interfere with clarity and require the reader to stop, think and re-read to determine the writer’s intended meaning. The ESL 52A emphasis on “a variety of sentence types including phrasal modifiers and complex sentences” and “agreement, tense and aspect” will address difficulties of that kind and prepare the student for English 1A.

Recommend ESL 223A

(1) Addressing the Prompt

<p>Rubric requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understands and provides an intelligible, extended response to prompt
<p>Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 222B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare and analyze multiple perspectives on a complex issue at high intermediate ESL level • distinguish fact from opinion, content from own response at a high intermediate level
<p>Content of the target course, ESL 223A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare and analyze to a limited extent multiple perspectives on a complex issue

Discussion: Since all of the writing prompts used in the assessment tool involve comparisons, an “intelligible, extended” response to them requires an ability to “compare and analyze multiple perspectives on a complex issue.” A student able to do this in assessment writing is prepared for the emphasis on this skill in ESL 223A.

(2) Organization

Rubric requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main points mostly clear • paragraphs have some internal organization
Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 222B: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate developing ability to use connectors, logical structures and transition signals to connect ideas
Content of the target course, ESL 223A: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compose essays and narratives in a variety of rhetorical modes

Discussion: In order to construct paragraphs with internal organization, making clear points, “the student must use “connectors, logical structures and transition signals to connect ideas.” This is a preparatory step to learning to “compose essays and narratives in a variety of rhetorical modes” in ESL 223A.

(3) Development

Rubric requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports points with clear, specific, and sufficient examples and details
Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 222B: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate developing ability [to arrange] ideas in hierarchical structure
Content of the target course, ESL 223A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compose essays and narratives in a variety of rhetorical modes

Discussion: In order to “[support] points with clear, specific, and sufficient examples and details,” the student must be able to organize ideas in order of importance (i.e., hierarchical order), at least to some extent. This is also preparatory step to learning to “compose essays and narratives in a variety of rhetorical modes” in ESL 223A.

(4) Clarity

Rubric requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sentence structure and vocabulary sufficient to express meaning • some sentence variety • may require occasional rereading
Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 222B: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use low intermediate English grammar structures, including direct and embedded question forms, past continuous and present perfect tenses, modals and modal-like expressions in present and past tense, complex sentences using adverb and adjective clauses, and real conditions • demonstrate developing ability to use connectors, logical structures and transition signals to connect ideas
Content of the target course, ESL 223A: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high intermediate English grammar structures

Discussion: The student placed in ESL 223A, like the student placed in ESL 52A, uses “structure and vocabulary sufficient to express meaning,” with occasional errors that require re-reading for full comprehension. The student placed in 223A attempts many of the

specific grammar structures listed in the performance objectives for the prerequisite course 222B. In ESL 223A, the student will build on this grammatical knowledge to learn the structures listed for that level.

Recommend ESL 222A

(1) Addressing the Prompt

<p>Rubric requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understands and provides an intelligible, extended response to prompt
<p>Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 285B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> compare and analyze two or more perspectives on an issue at a low intermediate level distinguish fact from opinion, content from own response at a low intermediate level
<p>Content of the target course, ESL 222A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> compare and analyze multiple perspectives at an intermediate level

Discussion: Since all of the writing prompts used in the assessment tool involve comparisons, an “intelligible, extended” response to them requires an ability to “compare and analyze multiple perspectives on a complex issue.” A student who is placed in ESL 222A (low intermediate) is able to do this to a more limited extent than a student placed in 223A (high intermediate). S/he will then continue to develop these skills in ESL 222A.

(2) Organization

<p>Rubric requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> main points mostly clear paragraphs have some internal organization
<p>Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 285B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use high-frequency sentence connectors, logical structures and transition signals
<p>Content of the target course, ESL 222A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> respond to complex writing assignments

Discussion: In order to construct paragraphs with internal organization, making clear points, “the student must use “connectors, logical structures and transition signals to connect ideas.” The student placed in ESL 222A differs from the student placed in ESL 223A from the point of view of the variety of sentence connectors, logical structures and transition signals that are attempted. Those mastered by the end of ESL 285 are a subset of those mastered by the end of 222A. The use of basic, high-frequency forms of this kind is a preparatory step to learning to “respond to complex writing assignments” in ESL 222A.

(3) Development

<p>Rubric requirements:</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attempts to support points • support may lack clarity or relevance
Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 285B: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorporate into writing appropriate vocabulary and structures
Content of the target course, ESL 222A: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respond to complex writing assignments

Discussion: The student placed in ESL 222A has mastered a limited amount of vocabulary and grammar structure, which s/he can use to construct sentences in which s/he makes and supports statements. At this level, consistent clarity or relevance is not yet expected. This will develop as the student learns to respond to complex writing assignments in 222A.

(4) Clarity

Rubric requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some effective sentence structure and vocabulary • may require some rereading
Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course, ESL 285B: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use high beginning English grammar structures, including affirmative and negative statements and questions, simple present, past and future tenses, present continuous tense, high-frequency modals, simple and compound sentences including cause and effect relationships, articles, demonstratives and high-frequency prepositions • use high-frequency sentence connectors, logical structures and transition signals
Content of the target course, ESL 222A: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low intermediate English grammar structures

Discussion: The student placed in ESL 222A attempts the kinds of grammar structures listed in the performance objectives for ESL 285B, with errors that require re-reading for full comprehension. In ESL 222A, the student will build on this grammatical knowledge to learn the structures listed for that level.

Recommend ESL 285A

(1) Addressing the Prompt

Rubric requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understands and provides an intelligible response to prompt
Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESL 285A has no prerequisite course
Content of the target course, ESL 285A: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summary and response to texts • demonstrate comprehension of chunks of high-interest reading material • compare and analyze two different perspectives on an issue at a high beginning level

Discussion: In ESL 285A, students read passages of material and summarize and respond to them in writing. The ability to learn to do this in the course a semester is based on some basic English reading and writing skills on entering the course, which will be demonstrated by comprehending the assessment prompt and responding to it in some intelligible fashion.

(2) Organization

<p>Rubric requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main points unclear • may be “stream-of-consciousness”
<p>Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESL 285A has no prerequisite course
<p>Content of the target course, ESL 285A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summary and response to texts • simple and compound sentences including cause and effect relationships, articles, demonstratives and high-frequency prepositions

Discussion: Although some intelligible response to the assessment prompt is expected of a student entering ESL 285, organization and arrangement of ideas in a hierarchy is not yet expected; stream-of-consciousness writing is very typical of student writing at this level. In 285A, they will learn to construct sentences that express cause and effect relationships, the first step in organizing their ideas on paper.

(3) Development

<p>Rubric requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • points minimally or not supported
<p>Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESL 285A has no prerequisite course
<p>Content of the target course, ESL 285A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summary and response to texts • simple and compound sentences including cause and effect relationships, articles, demonstratives and high-frequency prepositions

Discussion: Points made in student writing at this level are brief and unsupported. In 285A, the student will learn sufficient vocabulary and grammar structure to summarize and respond to writing, developing and supporting their statements.

(4) Clarity

<p>Rubric requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited sentence structure and vocabulary • requires rereading
<p>Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESL 285A has no prerequisite course

Content of the target course, ESL 285A:

- high beginning English grammar structures, including affirmative and negative statements and questions, simple present, past and future tenses, present continuous tense, high-frequency modals

Discussion: Although the student entering ESL 285A must be able to produce at least a few intelligible sentences in English, at the beginning of this course there is no expectation of grammatical correctness in the use of verb forms and tenses. These skills will be learned in ESL 285A.

Recommend Adult School**(1) Addressing the Prompt****Rubric requirements:**

- doesn't address prompt
- seems not to understand task

Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course:

- not applicable

Content of the target course:

- not applicable

(2) Organization**Rubric requirements:**

- none

Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course:

- not applicable

Content of the target course:

- not applicable

(3) Development**Rubric requirements:**

- points minimally or not supported

Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course:

- not applicable

Content of the target course:

- not applicable

(4) Clarity**Rubric requirements:**

- not intelligible

Related performance objective(s) from the prerequisite course:

- not applicable

Content of the target course:

- not applicable

Discussion: The student referred to adult school classes does not yet have the English reading or writing skills required to understand the assessment prompt or respond to it in any meaningful or intelligible way. These skills can be learned in adult school ESL classes that are lower in level than ESL 285A, PCCD's lowest ESL level.