

2008 FLORIDA CELLA COMMUNIQUÉ #4

Effective Use of CELLA Speaking Scoring Rubrics

In order to ensure that the judgments teachers make about student's speaking performance are valid and reliable, it is important that Test Administrators:

- be qualified to administer the test, that is be proficient in English;
- become very familiar with the speaking scoring rubrics used to evaluate each item type, and
- listen carefully to the benchmark and training responses—and understand why each response received the score it did.

There is no substitute for working through all of the training materials. Simply reviewing and planning to apply the rubrics is not enough; Test Administrators **must** come into their first one-on-one administration with the frame of reference for scoring that listening to the benchmarks gives them.

- A score of 4, 3, 2, or 1 for a particular task conveys information about a student's speaking ability in English. The rubric is your guide to what each score point means for each task.
- Because the criteria are clearly specified in the rubric, different teachers using the same rubric to assess a particular student should arrive at the same score. It is important that teachers leave behind any personal criteria and work instead to apply the criteria called for in the rubric.
- Well-trained Test Administrators will apply the same criteria to each student, allowing the assessment to be more objective and consistent. This is central to making the assessment reliable.
- CELLA uses holistic rubrics to evaluate speaking. Rather than measuring individual aspects of a student's performance or totaling individual errors, a holistic rubric calls for a general evaluation of the overall performance.
- Benchmark responses contained in the training materials allow a rubric to "come alive" by providing authentic examples of performances by real students at the various score points.
- There is no limit to how many students will fall within a score range—scoring is based strictly on the criteria spelled out in the rubric, not on how many students "should" be in a certain range.

Tips for Administering the Speaking Section

- Make the student as comfortable as possible. Try to create a congenial, positive atmosphere. CELLA should be considered an opportunity for ELLs to demonstrate what they know and can do in English.
- Before you begin your first session with a student, review the rubrics one more time to refresh yourself on the criteria you will be using to assess the student. *(For your reference, the rubrics appear in the script used to administer the test.)*
- If a student does not initially understand a prompt, repeat the prompt, varying the speed and intonation as appropriate.
- If a student's response is too brief to accurately assess the student's speaking ability, ask probing questions as appropriate. Probing questions can be used to:
 - get students started speaking if they are stuck;
 - clarify the question itself, if that will help, and
 - encourage the student to expand or elaborate on his/her response.

Note that probing questions must not introduce new topics, change the focus of the topic, or provide students with language or vocabulary to use in their response.

- If a student does not respond to five questions in a row, you may stop administering the test. Keep in mind that not responding does not mean answering incorrectly. If a student is engaged in the tasks and continues to answer questions, even incorrectly, the administration should continue.