

**Linking Assessment to Instruction:
Teachers Report on the
Authentic Literacy Assessment System (ALAS) Implementation**

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It has become ... important to focus on the process that we've started with the ALAS -- (to) focus on the process of guiding our instruction, organizing our curriculum, teaching the children in a way that is more appropriate for them.
(Juliana, Bilingual Special Education Teacher)

This paper reports on the professional planning and development component of the Authentic Literacy Assessment System (ALAS)¹. The ALAS, a collaborative project of the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), university researchers, and teachers in two urban, linguistically diverse elementary schools, aims to reform school-wide writing instruction for linguistically and culturally diverse students. Since the summer of 1997, teachers, an SFUSD Literacy Coach, and University of California, Berkeley, researchers have worked together to develop and implement research-based ways of teaching and assessing writing to diverse elementary school students.

Teacher involvement has been a central component of this longitudinal project. In the two participating elementary schools, teachers have been engaged in intensive, ongoing, planning, implementation, and training aimed at reforming writing instruction and classroom assessment practices. This has been evident in four concurrent school-wide activities: (a) development and yearly administration of ongoing ALAS writing events for all students in each language of instruction; (b) creation and revision of writing rubrics, including alignment of rubrics with district writing standards, and selection of writing exemplars, or "anchor papers," for all rubric scores; (c) frequent scoring of students' writing samples; and; (d) linking ALAS data to biliteracy instruction.

After a brief introduction to the ALAS, this report describes the four concurrent professional development activities, and examines the impact of the ALAS on teachers' professional practices. Using qualitative data consisting of field notes, teachers' written assessments of meetings, and four in-depth interviews, the paper looks at ways in which individual teachers have integrated the notion of linking authentic assessment to existing language arts instruction, and to other core curriculum areas.

Overview of the ALAS

The ALAS allows students to explore writing as a process in the context of the language arts curriculum in bilingual and English language development classrooms. At the two participating schools, it is administered three times a year in all the languages of instruction, giving teachers periodic indicators of their students' writing strengths and needs.

The assessment takes place over two days in K-5th grade classroom. The administration of the assessment is the same at each grade level. It includes pre-writing preparation that integrates the four main language arts, reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and a written response to a prompt.

¹ Although I have authored this report, countless people have contributed to the ongoing work at the two elementary schools discussed in this report. These include: the staff, principals, and students at both schools, the SFUSD Literacy Coach, Erminda García, the principal investigator, Eugene García, and the other researchers, Ann-Marie Wiese, Alice Sun Irminger, Marco Bravo, Laurie Dickie, Katherine Chun, and Olga García.

On the first day, teachers and students read a piece of literature that is at grade level and that is relevant to students' lives. It also introduces the theme of the writing prompt that students will respond to on the second day of the assessment. Whenever possible, literature that is readily available to all teachers is selected (e.g. from the district-adopted language arts series). After reading, teachers and students discuss themes raised by the literature, and link these themes to students' personal experiences. To guide these whole-class discussions, teachers use questions designed in advance for each grade level, and record students' comments on chart paper. In Kindergarten and first grades, the whole class discussion includes developing a graphic organizer (known by some as a "cognitive map") that supports students when they respond to the writing prompt on the second day. In grades 2 to 5, after the whole-class discussion, students work in pairs or small groups to complete graphic organizers in preparation for their written responses.

On the second day of the assessment, students respond in writing to the writing prompt. Students have a set amount of time to complete their responses (up to 30 minutes for K through 2nd grades, and up to an hour for 3rd through 5th grades). They are encouraged to use their graphic organizers to support their writing. Students receive no assistance from teachers at this time.

Students' first drafts are scored by teachers, and teachers use the information gathered at the scoring sessions to modify their language arts curriculum.

The sites

Sierra Madre Elementary School².

(The relationship between the school and its community) is really tough... Part of (the difficulty) is that we bring our kids from different communities, none that are around our school. So we bring the African American children from the community by the baseball park, and they come on the (school) bus. Parents don't really feel like they belong here -- it isn't really their school... Then we have the Latino community which usually comes on the city buses, because they're from the Latino neighborhood or the adjacent town... Because of who our principal is, a Latina, (that community feels an affiliation). But if there wasn't (an affiliation), they would be marginalized too. So, because we don't have a neighborhood school, it makes (building community) hard.

(Eva, Bilingual First Grade Teacher)

Sierra Madre Elementary School serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade and is located in a residential, middle- to upper-middle class neighborhood of San Francisco. The school offers kindergarten through 5th grade Spanish-English bilingual, English Language Development, and Special Education classrooms (one for learning difficulties and one for developmental delays).

Approximately 80 % of the nearly 345 students receive free or reduced lunch. 35.3% of students are language minority students classified by the school district as "Limited or Non-English Proficient." US-born, Mexican-American, and Central American Latino-background students

² Names of places and people have been changed to preserve anonymity.

constitute the largest ethnic community in the school. The district's school profile for Sierra Madre Elementary reports the following demographic population of students:

Table 1. Student demographics at Sierra Madre School by ethnic categories

Latino	African-American	"Other White" ³	"Other Non-White" ⁴	Pilipino	Chinese	Native American	Korean
60.0%	13.4%	10.2%	8.2%	7.6%	2.6%	2.0%	0.3%

Chang Ching Elementary School.

Chang Ching is a school that is based in the middle of ... a predominantly Latino district... A lot of the kids that we have in the Spanish bilingual program live around the neighborhood. Their brothers and sisters have studied here. Parents work here. On Saturdays and Sundays, if you come, you'll see this is the playground where they play, instead of (going to) a park or something. So this school is not just a place for (kids) to study. It's a part of their lives. A lot of the other students who are not in the Spanish Bilingual program -- their parents have a lot of involvement here. They come to Nutrition Night, parent involvement groups, so they're really integrated in the community.

(Juliana)

Chang Ching Elementary School serves students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade and is located in a vibrant working class Latino community in the heart of San Francisco. School staff maintain close ties with the surrounding community and with parents. The school offers a pre-kindergarten program as well as kindergarten through 5th grade Spanish-English bilingual, Chinese-English bilingual, English Language Development, Deaf Education, and Special Education (learning disabilities) classrooms.

Approximately 80 % of the nearly 470 students receive free or reduced lunch. 76.3% of students are language minority students classified by the school district as "Limited or Non-English Proficient." Latino students of US-born, Mexican-American, and Central American backgrounds constitute the largest ethnic community in the school. US- and foreign-born Chinese-background students constitute the second largest ethnic community. The district's school profile for Chang Ching Elementary reports the following demographic population of students:

Table 2. Student demographics at Chang Ching School by ethnic categories

Latino	Chinese	African-American	"Other Non-White"	Pilipino	"Other White"	Native American
60.0%	24.1%	5.1%	3.4%	3.2%	3.0%	0.9%

Professional planning and development

The traditional terms "professional development" and "teacher training" can give the false impression that in this project, learning has been unidirectional, with teachers simply receiving knowledge from an external source (such as a university or a teacher coach), then implementing

³ (i.e. European American)

⁴ (i.e. Middle-Eastern, Mixed-heritage)

this knowledge in their classrooms. However, this is an action research project, and since its inception in 1997, teachers, principals, and researchers have shared decision-making in the design and implementation of this bilingual, authentic writing assessment. Teacher workshops, where teachers take a more formal "learner" role, do take place, however, these generally occur at the bidding of the teachers themselves. For instance, teachers occasionally express the need to learn more about teaching a certain aspect of writing, and we work with the school's professional development committee or with the principal to set up a workshop on the areas identified by teachers.

As a result of this co-development, the ALAS has taken shape differently at each of the two schools, depending on local circumstances and on site-based decisions made by teachers and administrators. Still, the ALAS at both schools shares the same general implementation characteristics which are described in the next section.

Development of the ALAS. In July and September, 1997, University of California researchers met with teachers and principals from Chang Ching and Sierra Madre elementary schools, under the auspices of the SFUSD's Bilingual Education Language Academy. Together, school staff and researchers worked through a data examination process, scrutinizing students' standardized scores and attempting to identify areas of instructional need. Teachers at both schools confirmed what they already knew to be true. As measured by standardized assessments, first through fifth grade students demonstrated language and literacy that was well below grade level expectations.

However, while teachers were able to make such general data statements, they found that the standardized testing information did not provide specific information about students' academic knowledge in a way that was immediately relevant to classroom instruction -- the state-wide, external assessments were not aligned with the California or the SFUSD Language Arts Standards, and were not embedded in daily classroom practices. Additionally, standardized test results were not made available in a timeframe that would allow teachers to improve their instruction before students completed the academic year.⁵

Teachers expressed an urgent need to have an assessment that could provide specific data about their students' literacy on an ongoing basis throughout the school year, and in all the languages of instruction. Teachers could use this type of data to tailor their instruction to the specific strengths and needs of the particular students in their classrooms.

Later, in an interview, Juliana, the Chang Ching teacher introduced at the beginning of this paper, expressed this idea in the following way:

... (If) I want to see how effective my instruction is, I would like to have a baseline to say, "OK, they arrived to me like this, and this is what they are doing now. And so, what is going to be the goal?"

⁵ Results for the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) (the standardized test in California at that time) were released, at the earliest, in late May, and results for the Spanish Assessment of Basic Education were often released after the school year had ended, making any change in instructional approaches impossible. There were no external examinations in Chinese.

Teachers and researchers noted that the school districts' Integrated Writing Assessment (IWA), which was administered once a year in English to fourth graders, contained elements which, if modified substantially, would have the potential to inform instruction: This existing assessment was aligned with SFUSD's language arts standards, it was based on process writing theories, and it is was direct assessment of children's writing.

We noted that if such an assessment (a) were altered to suit students at different grade levels, (b) took place several times a year, and (c) took place in all the languages of instruction, it would yield data that would be useful to teachers working to tailor language arts instruction to their students. So, while initially inspired by the SFUSD's IWA, the Authentic Literacy Assessment System can be distinguished from the district wide assessment in that it is developed specifically for the student body at the schools, it is offered to students at every grade level, it is ongoing, and it is bilingual. Additionally, it includes a substantial amount of teacher involvement and development, described here, through which instructional reform happens.

With the help of the Bilingual Education Language Academy's Literacy Coach, during the 1997-1998 school year we developed and piloted several authentic writing assessment events in the different languages of instruction at all grade levels. This process began with an experiential workshop, where teachers themselves "sat" the district's fourth grade assessment, then reflected on ways in which it could be modified for their particular students. For instance, at Sierra Madre school, teachers brainstormed different types of pre-writing exercises that they could do with their classes. The list included sequencing events in the story with sentence strips and through small-group dramatic enactment, and detailing characteristics of the protagonist's personality and decisions in the story. After this initial workshop, teachers, researchers, and the Coach worked together to develop grade-specific assessments (the procedures are described at the beginning of this paper). Teachers felt that the instructional practices embedded in the ALAS procedures were authentic in that they mirrored the elementary-level writing curriculum. However, they recognized that some of the authenticity of the assessment would be lost by standardizing the administration procedures across same-grade classrooms. Still, they agreed that similar procedures should be followed in different classrooms in order to have data that could be used on a school-wide level.

Since the beginning of the project, we have worked through initial implementation issues regarding administration procedures, and have come up with the procedures described at the beginning of this paper. Four of the implementation issues that we have worked through have been whether or not to standardize same-grade pre-writing activities, whether or not to elicit students' writing in the same genre during each year's multiple assessments, how frequently to administer the assessment, and how to develop multiple quality assessments for each grade level in each language of instruction.

During the pilot year, teachers maintained uniform administration procedures for the writing segment of the assessment. However, they varied in the pre-writing activities that they presented to students prior to the written response. For instance, one teacher may do all the pre-writing activities in one day, while another may do a variety of activities over the course of three days. Teachers saw the value in this individual approach to pre-writing for day-to-day instructional purposes. However, by the end of the pilot year, teachers agreed that, in order to have data that was comparable across the school, at the time of the assessment, all teachers should follow the

same procedures. Ongoing grade-level discussions among teachers ensure that the ALAS continues to address the realities of the culturally and linguistically diverse student body at the school.

With respect to the kind of writing that we were assessing, we learned that, in order to get the greatest benefit from the frequent administrations, prompts should elicit student writings in roughly the same genre each time. That is, we found that it was difficult to assess three writings done by an individual student when two pieces had been written for narrative purposes, and one for persuasive purposes. While teachers continued to provide opportunities for students to write in varied genres, they held that students should not be required to write in widely ranging styles for the three ALAS administrations.

The issue of the frequency of the ALAS administrations was one that needed refining over the first two years of the project. During the pilot year, we attempted to administer the ALAS bimonthly in both languages of instruction. Preparation for such frequent administration proved to be extremely impractical, and did not leave teachers with sufficient time to alter their instruction between the scoring of papers. This was especially true of bilingual classrooms, where assessments were administered in two languages. In 1998-99 we administered the ALAS quarterly. While the frequent paper scoring meetings enabled teachers to become experts in analyzing their students' writing, they did not leave time for teachers to develop ways of modifying their instruction to individual students' literacy needs and strengths. In 1999-2000, and again in 2000-2001, the ALAS was administered three times. Once in the fall, at the beginning of the school year, once in the winter, and once in the spring. This schedule has allowed teachers and researchers to analyze data more fully, and to spend more time on developing instructional strategies to improve students' writing.

One issue that continued to generate concern was the creation of high quality ALAS activities for each grade level and in each language of instruction. Quality literature had to be identified, appropriate pre-writing activities had to be developed, and good writing prompts (in similar genres) had to be created. The district-adopted language arts series had quality literature for primary grades in English and Spanish. After the first year, 4th and 5th grade teachers decided that the lengthy texts of the adopted series were inappropriate for the purposes of the ALAS. They began to select other high interest, grade level literature for the ALAS. Chinese-English bilingual teachers have struggled to find interesting and appropriate literature in Chinese, but the small team of teachers has worked together to develop grade-level appropriate pre-writing activities and prompts to compensate for the paucity in literature (see Sun Irminger, forthcoming, for more).

Needless to say, developing quality ALAS activities is time consuming and challenging, and could not easily be done during the school year. After a trying first year of preparing assessments during the academic year, the summer 1999 team of teachers at Sierra Madre Elementary worked to develop a full packet of ALAS activities for K-5th grades in English and Spanish. These were prepared and given to teachers at the beginning of the following school year. However, at Chang Ching Elementary, the extensive rubric work (described below) precluded other activities, and this made a smooth implementation of the ALAS during the 99-00 school year difficult.

In sum, the implementation challenges described in this section led teachers and researchers to continue altering the way the assessment was administered. Even as this took place, the Coach worked with teachers in a workshop setting to analyze student writing and to create school-specific writing rubrics to use for scoring the student writings. The following section describes this aspect of the teachers' work.

Analysis of writing, creation, and revision of writing rubrics

In late 1997, the Coach met with the staff at the two schools to examine student writings and to begin developing a common language for discussing students' work. The teachers examined varied writing rubrics, or scoring guides. In particular, they looked at holistic rubrics and analytic rubrics. The holistic rubrics described general features of student writing at different levels of proficiency, while analytic rubrics looked at different elements of writing in relation to each other (e.g. Topic, Organization, Style/Voice, Conventions). At both schools, teachers saw that, while holistic rubrics provided good general pictures of how written work was done, analytic rubrics provided more specific information that could provide details on classroom instruction. They opted to generate analytic rubrics using the four categories mentioned above.

In Spring, 1998, the Coach led the two groups of teachers in creating first drafts of 6 point, analytic rubrics that they would use to score student papers. The score of 4 would be the "benchmark" score for the grade level, and teachers' instructional goals would include getting students at least to score 4 in the different categories (Topic, Organization, Style/Voice, Conventions).

Site-specific decisions in how the ALAS scoring would develop began to emerge as the school-wide rubrics were being created. The general rubric development procedures are described here, with attention to the two school's varying approaches. (Because of the size and graphic complexity of the rubrics, it is not possible to reproduce them here. However some rubrics are displayed in Garcia, et al [1999]. The appendix of this paper shows sections of one school's English language rubrics at different times.)

At both sites, teachers worked in grade-level teams to look at other writing rubrics and select writing descriptors that made sense to them. At Sierra Madre School, teachers developed three rubrics for grades K-1, 2-3, and 4-5. Since at that time, many classrooms at Chang Ching School were multi-age, teachers opted for two rubrics: Grades pre-K to 2 and 3 -5. The rubric-creation exercises were the first of many opportunities that teachers had to develop a school-wide language for discussing their students' literacy learning.

Once complete, the first drafts of the rubrics were used to begin scoring student work that Spring. Teachers made changes to the new rubrics as they scored writing samples. Teachers also worked with the Coach to begin selecting the best exemplars, or "anchor papers" for each score on the rubric.

At both schools, the teachers began by developing English rubrics as a whole staff. Later, bilingual teachers developed rubrics in Spanish, and, at Chang Ching School, in Chinese as well. The Spanish and Chinese rubrics began as direct translations of the English rubrics that had been agreed upon by the whole staff. This is because, first, teachers wanted the rubrics in different

languages to relate to one another, and second, because there were few resources for the creation of rubrics in Spanish, and especially in Chinese. After rubrics were translated into Spanish and Chinese, bilingual teachers began the difficult work of tailoring the rubrics to the specifics of teaching and learning writing in the specific languages.

In the Summer 1998, teams of teachers from both schools worked with researchers to revise the rubrics, and to align them with the SFUSD's Language Arts Standards. Teachers looked critically at the first drafts of the rubrics, and moved and rephrased descriptors. They also examined the Language Arts Standards, and made sure that the school's expectations were not below those of the school district. At both schools, teachers aimed to set higher expectations for students.

While the revision of the Sierra Madre rubrics was straightforward, the revision of the Chang Ching rubrics presented some problems. As teachers from Chang Ching Elementary tackled the rubric revision process, they found that, in their attempt to have two rubrics spanning 3 to 4 grades (pre-K to 2nd, and 3rd - 5th), they had created two rubrics that displayed no continuity in what was expected of students in primary and upper elementary grades. Additionally, since there would be few multi-age classrooms in the upcoming school year, there was a need for three rubrics that would be used to assess students in K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 grade levels. Finally, teachers noted that the existing writing descriptors for Kindergarten did not describe features of the earliest emergent writing such as curls and lines.

The team of teachers modified the existing rubrics in the following ways. First, they added two scores to the bottom of the primary level rubric for emergent, or what they termed, "Pre-Kindergarten" writing. Second, they expanded the two rubrics into three rubrics. In order to ensure that these three rubrics were related, teachers decided to overlap the descriptors so that the top two scores of the K-1 rubric (scores 5 and 6) became the bottom two scores of the 2-3 rubric (scores 1 and 2). Similarly, the top two scores of the 2-3 rubric became the bottom two scores of the 4-5 rubric.

The teachers felt strongly that this continuum be reflected in the numbering of the scores of the rubric. They decided that, instead of having three rubrics numbered 1-6, the school-wide rubric should have a single numbering system, as follows: (a) Scores 1 to 2 should be assigned to Pre-K; (b) the following six scores (scores 3 - 8) should be assigned to K-1; (c) the six scores 5-10 should be assigned to grades 2-3; (d) and the six scores 9-14 should be assigned to grades 4-5.

The Sierra Madre team of teachers opted for a more simple approach, keeping the three rubrics separate with scores from 1-6.⁶ At the 1998 summer work sessions, Sierra Madre teachers were also able to revise the Spanish rubric. Chang Ching teachers did so only at the beginning of the 1998-99 school year. This delay caused some logistical difficulties in the implementation of the ALAS that Fall. The revised rubrics and their accompanying anchor papers were used to score the students' samples during the school year.

Finally, using the new rubrics, the teams of teachers from both schools scored student papers in order to identify best examples, or "anchor papers" for every score. By the end of the summer's work meetings, anchor papers had been selected for almost every score of the English rubrics. At

⁶ At both sites, the 4th score in the rubric was the benchmark for that grade level.

Sierra Madre School, Spanish anchor papers were also identified. Once teachers identified anchor papers, researchers wrote narrative descriptions of the selected student samples, and these, along with the anchor papers, were used as references for scoring by the staff during the following school year.

At both schools, the rubrics are considered to be "works in progress." As teachers gain familiarity with the rubrics through scoring (described in the following section), they identify inconsistencies in the rubrics. Therefore, revision of the rubrics is an ongoing goal.

In the summer of 1999, teams of teachers at both schools revised the rubrics again. At Chang Ching, revisions were substantial. The descriptors in each category were labeled and reorganized (see appendix). This alteration was made to the rubrics in the three languages. At this time, the Spanish and Chinese rubrics were revised to reflect specific features of those languages. For instance, conventional spelling in Spanish was expected much earlier than conventional spelling in English, since Spanish has very regular, phonetic spelling. In Chinese, teachers rewrote significant portions of the rubric to better suit the writing system. For instance, they had to figure out how to include students' growing use of radicals in front of characters, and of proverbial phrases (see Sun Irminger, forthcoming).

In the summer of 2000, Chang Ching teachers revised their rubrics once more. At Sierra Madre, administrators decided to have the entire staff work together on the rubric revisions at the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year. However, revising the rubrics in the fall proved difficult, given the labor intensive nature of the task. The next set of rubric revisions is scheduled for the summer of 2001.

At the beginning of the 1998-99, 1999-2000 school years, we compiled the work of the summer work teams, and provided ALAS resource binders to every teacher at both schools. These included: the schedule of ALAS events for the year, the ALAS activities, the revised rubrics, the anchor papers, ALAS administration procedures, rubric worksheets, and teacher scoring spread sheets. Researchers took the initiative for preparing these binders the first summer of the project. Sierra Madre school staff took increasing responsibility for the development of their teachers' binders in the following two years, and last summer, completed the binders with minimal technical assistance from the researchers. Chang Ching school, which suffered discontinuity in its leadership (discussed below), was not in a position to develop its own binders, so researchers provided full technical assistance with this aspect of the ALAS preparation all three summers.

The scoring of student writings. As discussed above, the scoring of student writings is interrelated with the creation and revision of the rubrics. In order to learn to score papers, teachers first dialogued with each other and with the Coach to come to agreement about strengths and weaknesses of different student samples, and about the relationship between standards, rubrics, teaching and learning. Once the rubrics were ready, teachers used them to score students' papers in grade level groups. As teachers worked in these groups, they learned to identify features of students' writings according to the rubric descriptors.

Initially, both schools scored papers fairly similarly. Developing scoring procedures that worked with both teachers and researchers was difficult. Teachers insisted that they should score their own students' papers in order to understand their strengths and needs. Researchers wanted to

ensure that teachers were scoring in equivalent ways school-wide, and that preference was not given to individual students. Individual teachers expressed these concerns as well, and over time, we developed scoring procedures that included external checks on individual teachers' scoring. At both schools, we asked teachers to use the anchor papers to guide their scoring in order to provide a common reference.

At Sierra Madre School, teachers and the principal developed the following procedures. Individual teachers score one third of their own students papers, and one third of 2 other teachers' papers. At Chang-Ching School, teachers first score one paper all together, and discuss any differences in the scores. When the scoring begins, teachers exchange 10% of their papers with another teacher. The scoring that new teachers do is overseen by returning teachers.

Additionally, the types of scores given by the two schools are different. At Chang Ching school, teachers give papers scores for each category on the rubric, as well as a holistic score. The purpose for this is to let teachers first look at the specific areas where students' curriculum needs modification. After the analytic scoring, teachers look at each piece as a whole after having analyzed it to score it for Topic, Organization, Voice, and Conventions. Since this is not a standardized assessment, teachers are trained not to let the holistic score be a mathematical average of the scores in the 4 categories, rather the writing samples should bear a resemblance to the anchor paper for each score.

At Sierra Madre School, the staff have found that the holistic scores are not as useful to their instruction as the analytic scores. First, the analytic scores are the ones that provide clues to further instruction. Second, the holistic scores may conceal students' areas of weakness. For these reasons, at Sierra Madre, only analytic scores are given.

The scoring of student work has been the most difficult and time consuming element of ALAS for teachers. This is true, particularly for upper grade teachers whose students write two to three page pieces. At both schools, teachers record their individual students' scores in ways that inform them, their students, and parents. First, scores for each student's ALAS writings are recorded in graphic form on one 6 point rubric. Scores for the first sample are marked in one color, scores for the second sample are marked in a second color, and scores for the third sample are marked in a third color. The result is a graph indicating how the student has progressed in Topic, Organization, Style/Voice, and Conventions, during the year. Students and parents can look at this graph and at the three samples to understand the ALAS process. Second, all teachers keep score sheets with all their students' scores in each category. This spreadsheet serves as a database as teachers tailor their instruction to suit students' strengths and needs. The next section describes the ways in which the authentic writing assessment links to instruction.

Linking ALAS data to instruction. In spring, 1998, we asked teachers to write a response to the following question: "What role do you see that rubrics might have in informing your writing instruction?" Their responses highlight some of the key ways in which this assessment can be used as a tool to tailor classroom instruction to individual students, and as a tool to unify instructional goals school-wide.

Rubrics set one standard for our instruction. They set the goals for levels that the students need to achieve in their grade levels.

(Rubrics) help direct your attention to just where each child is, what needs to be worked on (individual assessment)...

Rubrics give the teacher clear expectations for students' writing. The rubrics we are developing indicate the range of students' writing within a grade level. I ... look at what skills (on the rubric) my students have not yet developed, and focus on these skills during mini-lessons.

I'd use (rubrics) at the start of the school year to help me with (student) grouping and planning. During the year, I'd use them as guidelines (for instruction). At the end of the year I'd use them to evaluate the child's progress and to inform the following teacher.

I think that rubrics can really help a writing program. It would fit well with portfolios. This would be a great way for me to really know where a student stands and what they need. It would also help me organize instruction.

I think it will not only help my instruction, but it will help students be aware of their own writing goals and where they need improvement.

Throughout the ALAS project different teachers have used the ALAS data individually, and to varying degrees, to inform their language arts instruction. For instance, at the scoring meetings for the English ALAS at Chang Ching School, upper grade Spanish-English bilingual teachers noticed that virtually all the students in the Chinese-English bilingual classrooms were using paragraphs. They asked, "How did you do that?" And the Chinese-English bilingual teachers discussed the instruction that they were using to teach paragraphing.

This type of informal dialogue and school-wide collaboration in instructional reform has been a healthy "byproduct" of the ALAS project. Still, it has been the goal of the staff and principals to make the link between the ALAS data and instruction more explicit and formal. Starting in 1998-1999, we have worked to provide teachers with time to meet, analyze their students' scores, and identify next steps for their writing instruction. When teachers asked for workshops for teaching particular aspects of writing, the university paid for substitutes and brought experts to do in-services on different teaching strategies.

As the ALAS administration and scoring processes became embedded in the schools' practices, more physical and conceptual time was made available for school-wide "links to instruction" meetings. At these meetings, staff met with the Coach or with researchers to group students with different instructional needs, and to develop lessons. Teachers used their class score sheets, circling groups of similar scores, and using these scores to create flexible student groupings for mini-lessons depending on individuals' needs. For instance, some students may benefit from a mini-lesson on topic development, while others may benefit from a mini-lesson on punctuation.

Through collegial conversations at the scoring sessions and "links to instruction" meetings, teachers have discussed the various ways in which students were becoming competent writers, and reaching the benchmarks. Teachers used the rubric partly as an indicator of students' writing development, however, because of the nature of the analytic rubric, the definition of

"development" took on a multifaceted quality -- the same student who showed strengths in the conventions of writing may show difficulty in developing a topics. The same student who showed a complex understanding of writing voice in the given genre may have difficulties with verb tense agreement. Rather than viewing the rubric as a set of linear stages that students invariably pass through to become competent writers, we saw that rubrics were being considered as having multiple pathways toward writing competence in the languages of instruction. And found evidence that they were being used by teachers, not just as indicators of student progress, but also as guidelines for instruction.

Local circumstances at the two schools caused different levels of involvement in linking ALAS data to instruction. At Chang Ching Elementary school, a sudden turn-over in leadership in the 1998-99 school year disrupted every aspect of the school's operations, including the ALAS work. Over the following two years, the school would have three additional principals. Juliana describes the ALAS project as a unifying factor during these difficult times for the school:

... There are certain things that I'm glad we agreed on before (the principal changed). Like for example, the ALAS: that's one thing that I think has given us cohesion, as a whole staff -- we needed to have something that is part of our program. This is part of our program, and we're not going to (give it up if the new principal wants to change it) because we discussed it a long time ago, and we agreed that that was good.

While the ALAS served to continue the cross-grade articulation of instruction and assessment during the organizational upheavals at Chang Ching School, the process of formalizing the assessment's links to instruction was interrupted.

Conversely, at Sierra Madre School, there has only been one principal, and this has added stability to the ALAS process. The principal, who is deeply committed to raising students' overall achievement, has expanded the school-wide articulation of instructional goals to include mathematics, and with the support of university researchers, a federal grant, additional administrative staff, and other outside resources, has created a data base of student scores that is used to inform instruction, and has created a "Cycle of Inquiry" that has lead to an Authentic Mathematics Assessment System (AMAS). The AMAS is an independent project of Sierra Madre school, and receives minimal technical assistance from university researchers. Additionally, the ALAS work has been expanded to include student-teacher conferences where students and teachers look at ALAS samples together and decide on goals for the next ALAS.

Four Teachers' Impressions of ALAS and Instruction

While over the past four academic years, we have had nearly staff-wide participation in the different components of the ALAS professional development, the degree to which the ALAS has impacted teachers has differed, depending on site-based factors such as school organization, and on individual teachers' professional experience and initiative. In the Spring of 2000, we interviewed four teachers (two from each school), and include here excerpts of their reflections on their classroom practice, assessment, and the role of ALAS in their teaching lives. The selections here are provided as narratives so as to give readers an idea of the multiple, interconnected factors influencing how teachers use ALAS in their classrooms.

At Sierra Madre School, we interviewed two Spanish-English bilingual teachers (first and fourth grade). The first grade teacher, Eva, is a veteran bilingual educator and teacher trainer, having taught in bilingual classrooms across the country for 25 years. Lucia, the 4th grade teacher has been teaching for four years. At Chang Ching School, we interviewed two Spanish-English bilingual teachers (see Sun Irminger, forthcoming, for information on Chinese-English bilingual teachers). Juliana has taught for 8 years, and at the time of the interview she had been teaching the bilingual, 3rd-4th-5th grade Special Education special day classroom for students with identified learning disabilities. Guillermo has taught for 6 years, and at the time of the interview was teaching a second grade classroom⁷.

Eva (Sierra Madre Elementary School). In her interview, Eva expressed support for the ALAS insofar as it supported practices she had already developed to assess students' learning in the classroom. She saw its value as a way of unifying the staff's approaches to instruction, and was a member of the planning and training team along with the principal.

What grades are your favorite? Why?

E: (I like to teach first grade because) I get to teach literacy, reading. I really like the notion of being able to take a child (and teaching what literacy) feels like and looks like. You can actually see a child bloom, reading, writing, right in front of you.

What is your school's overall goal? What do you believe should be your school's overall goal?

E: (The goal is one of) academic achievement, but understanding that children do it in a different way, that there are different ways of showing knowledge. I think it's important to let children know that what they bring to this learning is actually nurtured.

If I were a parent whose child did not speak English fluently, how would you describe to me how you would monitor whether my child is meeting the SFUSD standards?

E: Well, first of all I'd (tell you) about the kinds of flexible groupings (in my class). I know some kids learn in small groups, big groups, one group, etc. I make instruction content rich, very thematic, to make sure that the one thing kids learn about, they learn well. And, that has nothing to do with language. It has to do with good practices - lots of literature, lots of time to talk, lots of time to figure out the curriculum.

What do you perceive your role to be in the classroom?

E: my role is to find out what the resources and the strengths are that my students have -- what questions they have in their heads. I need to understand that they bring some learning.

What do you do to provide your students with strong academic support? What is your goal for those students who are learning in two languages?

E: I treat them equally. (We need to) get rid of that word "LEP" [Limited English Proficient]. I don't know where that word comes from, but my (native English speaking) kids are limited Spanish speakers and no one ever asks me about my LSPs. So, (I) get rid of that, and let them know that I'm holding them accountable to the same level that everybody is (held to). ... (My

⁷ The interviews at Sierra Madre School were carried out by Olga García. The interviews at Chang Ching School were carried out by Laurie Dickey and myself.

goals are for students) ... to meet the content standards of the district. To be readers and writers. To feel like, "I have a voice, I'm somebody important in this world. This world isn't going to go as far as it possibly could if I'm not there."

What is your opinion about different forms of assessment?

E: Well, I always say that's why I teach first grade because I don't have to use standardized measures (ha, ha). Why? What does it tell you? One picture -- ping. Photograph. Done. This is what (the student) cannot do. (I) don't like that. I am more interested in the other side of assessment: ... lots and lots of pictures over time, multiple pictures, drawings, writings, whatever we have (to show growth) over time. ...Of course, of course (kids) should be (assessed). I have no problem with the right type of test.

How do different kinds of assessment, such as standardized vs. performance/authentic, provide useful or accurate information about linguistically and culturally diverse students?

E: Well, standardized, first of all, I'm going to say what everybody else says. ...There isn't a fair test for those kids. ...That I forget about. When I look at authentic measures (I assess) what I'm teaching. If I'm not teaching very much my kids aren't going to (produce) very much. It is authentic. It is what (I) do every single day so (I) get better at it.

So, what is your perception about ALAS?

E: Well, I think the ALAS is -- because we have to standardize it -- it still takes away a little bit from the authenticity of just saying, "this is a good story." But I know we (the teachers) need to do that to be able to standardize our talk. So if we standardize our talk, maybe that's why we are all having the same (conversation). ... (The ALAS) says (to me) the same thing my other work is saying so I like that part of it.

How do you monitor your own students' progress? What tools do you use?

E: Portfolios and collections that I do. I'd like to say I do them very comprehensively, but more than that, I do them very consistently. So, three times during the year, I build it into my lesson plan. For example, I know that this week I missed two kids. I didn't get to observe them. That means that next week I'm going to have to get a little busier and watch them. I know that what's coming up the following week is to do ALAS. Well, what does that mean? Have I done a lot of reading and writing, having kids talk to me? If I haven't, I need to get busy and make sure that that is still part of what I'm doing.

Is ALAS one of the tools you use to measure and follow students' progress? How does ALAS relate to other ways in which you monitor student progress?

E: Sure, absolutely. And, if you saw our school portfolio collections, every grade level has ALAS at least three times to four times listed as one of the things to show the content and the performance standards. So we're actually saying, "with ALAS I'm showing that my kid has five performance standards that they (met)".

How is the school organized to assist you in the areas of discipline, professional development, and collegial support?

E: I think we're right at the point where we're ready to start looking and talking about our teaching. I think four years ago the school wasn't like that. People weren't sure that they knew

how to teach. I think we've realized it even with standardized scores, but I think ALAS has really helped us (to put in a structure to support teachers).

Lucia (Sierra Madre Elementary School). Like Eva, Lucia also participated fully in the ALAS implementation, but felt somewhat disenfranchised from the process. She described ways in which the ALAS work could be utilized more fully by the school.

What grades are your favorite? Why?

L: Well, I've been in fourth grade for the past three years, and I like it a lot, because the kids can reason and think more. It's not really teaching them how to write and how to be literate but its more like working with higher level skills around literacy which is exciting. You can see a lot of development at this time.

What is your school's overall goal? What do you believe should be your school's overall goal?

L: I think it is to service all kids and to have all kids be successful academically -- and that's what I think it should be.

If I were a parent whose child did not speak English fluently, how would you describe to me... how would you monitor whether my child is meeting the SFUSD standards?

L: I would look at their work, mostly by looking at their work. I think standardized tests are pretty biased. When somebody succeeds, (the standardized scores) pushes someone else down. That's just the nature of the norm referenced tests, so I wouldn't look at those.

What do you perceive your role to be in the classroom?

L: (As a teacher , a learner), and a facilitator. I have a lot of stuff that I need to just outright teach students, like long division. They can participate in helping teach each other once some of them have gotten it but initially I just need to just outright teach it. And there is a lot of knowledge that students already come with, that I need to just build on, like their literacies. But at this point they're already there, and I need to build on them.

What do you do to provide your students with strong academic support? What is your goal for those students who are learning in two languages?

L: To provide them with strong academic support I break up my class into different structures. Sometimes its whole group, but not that much. Often, I'm teaching something, and students are working in pairs or in small groups. A lot of times they work in centers where they're either doing something independently and I can give some individual attention to one person, or to a group of kids that are the same place. I think the more individual attention or small group attention they can have the better. ... For learning in two languages, each goal is different. Like Joshua who is an EO (English Only student), his personal New Year's goal was to learn to read and write better in Spanish. So I have paired him with a reading buddy occasionally during DEAR (Drop Everything And Read)Time and they'll read in Spanish. But I think I have to give a different answer to that question for my EOs and for my Spanish speakers. I have to push (my Spanish speakers) in English just as much. ...A fourth grade literacy goal is to be able to write a good paragraph in English and in Spanish. So, I push all my kids towards that minimal goal, but some kids will exceed that.

What is your opinion about different forms of assessment?

L: (Standardized) testing, its not really reflective of what kids (are learning)... it makes kids anxious. ... (The district) adopts a curriculum like Math Land, which builds really open and analytical thinking. And then suddenly, you're assessing the kids on all this other stuff. Standardized assessments are also inherently unnatural, and they promote divisiveness.

...We have school portfolios (that we use to assess kids). ... I tend to look more at the progress that's on the walls. For example with our (journal) writing samples. I have students reflect on their writing quarterly. I ask them what their best journal piece was, why, and how their writing is progressing.

When and how should linguistically and culturally diverse students be assessed?

L: All the time, at every moment possible. I think assessment is constant reflection. Today, I was going over the homework, and we did this simple division problem, it was ten remainder four. I asked kids (to analyze the problem) ... and they couldn't . That really clued me in. I left (the problem) up on the board and I'm going to address it first thing in the morning.

How do different kinds of assessment, such as standardized vs. performance/authentic, provide useful or accurate information about linguistically and culturally diverse students?

L: Well, ...with performance assessments, you have something real to look at, something that comes from the students. You can compare it to something else and you have it in your hands right away. You don't have to wait to get it back from some machine that corrects it three months later or the next year and you see this graph that you can't read and you have to spend an hour with someone telling you how to read the graph... I think that that's much more meaningful for parents too.

Is ALAS one of the tools you use to measure and follow students' progress? How does ALAS relate to other ways in which you monitor student progress?

L: This year I have not found it to be as effective (as last year). However I have found the ALAS student conferences, and the time with students, to be effective if they're done in the right way and immediately after the writing. And I have found ALAS to be effective in previous years when we (the staff) have spent some more time on it. But it hasn't been an effective tool for me this year. When we first developed it, it was much more in our hands. This year, it doesn't feel like we're helping the kids as much. ... I don't think we give it enough attention. I feel like we're spread so thin ...

How do you think it would work?

I thin it would work if we went back and revised the rubric. A lot of my kids do not fit on the 4/5 rubric, and they don't fit on the 2/3 rubric either because they're writing two whole pages but they're writing not one full sentence. We need to revise it so that it fits their writing so that it works for them. (*So do you think that there needs to be a rubric revision each year?*) Yes.

Is part of the problem that the school is involved in many big projects?

L: Yes. And maybe we should have a time where, on a monthly basis, at a staff meeting, the ALAS its looked at, so its not just left to sit for three months where you don't look at it or touch it but its alive somewhere. I mean maybe we need to get the kids to use the rubrics. There's been a lot of talk about it, but because we're doing math portfolios, and because we're doing a lot after school and other kinds of professional development which are all important too, (It doesn't get

done). I think everything we're doing is great, ...but I feel like we need to choose our priorities, not let them fall by the way side, keep them up.

Part of the problem is that we've had no in- service days this year either [the school district's budget cut included the four professional development days]. Last year at least we had some in-service days. I don't want to just blame it on the fact that we have our hands in so many pots, there are a lot of different factors contributing to why ALAS hasn't been kept up as much this year.

Guillermo (Chang Ching Elementary School). Guillermo was an enthusiastic participant in the ALAS work, and relied on ALAS to give shape to his in-class assessments. Still, he did not expand the notion of linking assessment to instruction in the way that Eva (above) and Juliana (below) did.

What grades are your favorite? Why?

G: I think my favorite grade so far is 2nd grade. I have only taught K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, but so far 2nd is my favorite. I think that it's the age, you know, the kids have a lot of energy and interest. Their curiosity is high, and they want to learn. ...They want to express themselves.

What is your school's overall goal? What do you believe should be your school's overall goal?

G: I think Chang Ching as a school, as an institution -- we want to be part of the community. We want to influence the community. We're working with the children so we have to feel part of the community. The idea of Chang Ching is ... to create individuals that can influence, that can participate effectively in the community...Those are my goals too, because I see it as something very important -- that kids can make a difference in the community. That's why I live so close to where I work, and (why) I work where I work.

If I were a parent whose child did not speak English fluently, how would you describe to me how you would monitor whether my child is meeting the SFUSD standards?

G: Well, you know we have the district standards. I use the district standards. I (have them up on) the door. And it's good for me because I often stop and ask, "OK, what have I done so far this year that's here?"

What do you perceive is your role in the classroom?

G: I'm a facilitator, a mediator. My role is to make sure that students have something to think about, that they're learning ways to participate in the school life, that they feel part of the school community.

What do you do to provide your students with strong academic support? What is your goal for those students who are learning in two languages?

G: I try to develop a love for reading, because that makes students independent in the learning. I show them how to access information in books, how to find pleasure in books. They are very good at finding and using resources in the classroom and I encourage them. I also like to get people involved. People come to my classroom and read to them. I like to connect them with the rest of the school so they can use what they're learning.

What is your opinion about different forms of assessment?

G: I think we're doing too much standardized testing, especially at the levels that I teach. I think it's not very helpful to teaching. Because by the time we get the results, the kids are no longer your students. So it doesn't make sense. But I do believe in assessing. ALAS is wonderful, because it helps us set goals in our teaching and also the children can themselves see where they are, in terms of their writing. To me, it's more effective because I can talk to my (teaching) peers and I can really find patterns, find where I'm teaching enough, and where I'm not doing enough.

When and how should linguistically and culturally diverse students be assessed?

G: I think that they should be assessed every year. Maybe two or three times a year. Definitely in the beginning. I do my own kind of assessment. I read with every child and (integrate the information I learn into my reading program). So I think assessment should be done at least a couple of times a year. But not the standardized testing. Assessing, like running records, or ALAS or whatever (teachers) feel comfortable with.

How do you monitor your own students' progress? What tools do you use?

G: Well, I save their work for their portfolios.

Is ALAS one of the tools you use to measure and follow students' progress?

G: Definitely!

How does ALAS relate to other ways in which you monitor student progress?

G: Well (it relates) to the portfolios and also to setting goals. If I see a child is not using capital letters let's say, then I work on that with the child, give her a mini lesson. With the rubrics we developed with ALAS, it's easier for me to set goals for the students and for (students to set goals for) themselves. (*So students are involved in their own assessment and goal setting?*) Yes, definitely.

Have you been able to incorporate ALAS into other assessments you use for instructional and curriculum planning, in both L1 and L2, for language arts and other subjects?

G: Yes, we're trying to do that with Math. That's the kind of thing that the school is embracing nicely. You know, with problem solving.

Juliana (Chang Ching Elementary School). As a special education teacher, Juliana was well versed in different kinds of assessments that children could be given, and this knowledge enhanced her use of the principle of linking assessment to instruction in her own practice. She described her excitement for the ALAS work, and described how she used elements of the ALAS work in other aspects of her instruction.

What grades are your favorite? Why?

J: Upper grades -- 3rd, 4th, 5th. Because you can have more discussions with the students. In the lower grades you are just teaching more about how the world works. Like rules, words, language... In the upper grades you have more opportunities to be critical, to start stating opinions and developing other kinds of thinking, like inquiry process skills. You can start that when they're very young, but I just find it more enjoyable to have deeper conversations with upper grade kids.

What is your school's overall goal? What do you believe should be your school's overall goal?

J: We have a mission. The mission states that Chang Ching is a community of lifelong learners, and that we are trying to foster individuals who are critical thinkers and who have a sense of community, who are able to state their voice and thoughts. ...The standards in California in different subject areas like mathematics, science, reading, writing, oral language, social studies -- all of them say, in a way, if you can summarize them, that students are going to be able to communicate their knowledge about all these different areas. They're going to be able to solve problems in different ways, and they're going to be able to make different statements about these different subject areas. So, if you're a critical thinker, then it doesn't matter what the content is. you're just setting down the structure. you can put any academic goal there, and they're going to be able to achieve it. If you love to learn, the content doesn't matter -- if you have the motivation to know more, to be a lifelong learner.

If I were a parent whose child did not speak English fluently, how would you describe to me... how would you monitor whether my child is meeting the SFUSD standards?

J: The district put out one evaluation which helps to evaluate the fluency in the second language, like the English language. You can evaluate the oral language, writing, and reading. It's very basic. They just have 4 levels. Basic, intermediate, advanced, and fluent. It has rubrics where you check what the things are that the student is doing in the first language and the second language and you move on from those to try to push him to the next level. Another way could be (to show) portfolios. (So you would) show the different assessment you use, putting examples (of student work in the portfolios) during the year.

Another (thing that we are doing) in the conferences is using the ALAS rubric for the writing assessment. So with parent conferences, I show parents the first sample of the writing, and where kids were scoring in the rubric, then I show them the second and third, so they can see the progress. It's right there. I have it in a binder. So they can just flip up the pages and see the progress. I have it in both languages, English and Spanish, so they can see the progress in both languages.

What do you perceive is your role in the classroom?

J: I perceive it as a facilitator of (students' inquiry) process. (I am) a guide to help them to find who they are and how they learn best. And (I am) a provider. (My goal is) just to provide all the experiences that I can for them to find out who they are and how they learn best. So (my role is that of) a facilitator and provider.

What do you do to provide your students with strong academic support? What is your goal for those students who are learning in two languages?

J: Vocabulary is very important. There are some things that you just need to memorize - see them a thousand times, so they stick. So, a lot of vocabulary. A print-rich environment - I don't use that many auditory processing strategies, because many of my kids have problems with that [Juliana teaches a Special Day Class for kids with learning difficulties]. So I use a lot of visual strategies.

Can you give me some examples? I can see them around the room. Maybe you could describe your room?

Well, we have a *huge* word wall in English and (one) in Spanish, and we have the first hundred most frequent words in English and in Spanish. We do exercises. Students go to the word wall,

and they are used to using the word wall. We have a lot of dictionaries, and they're used to getting the dictionaries to find words. We use a lot of cooperative strategies. They are used to helping each other. And then of course there's my paraprofessional and myself.

I use the blackboard a lot. (Right now there is a web [graphic organizer] on it). We also have a number line in Spanish and one in English. We have a math rubric, so (students) are aware of the expectations while they are solving problems -- so they can match their work with the rubric, and be able to know exactly where their work is. We have writing process pictures, so they know what the process is -- how to start with a brainstorm, organizing your ideas. Also the colors, a big times tables grid, A social studies wall, and the kids put the words we're studying in different categories, like food, shelter...

What is your opinion about different forms of assessment?

J: I really like assessments. That's something that I love to do. It depends, though, what you are assessing. The (standardized and authentic) assessments assess different things. So as a teacher you need to be very clear about what you are assessing. What the SAT 9 assesses is very different from what portfolios would assess. What the ALAS would assess is very different from what the PIAT assesses. So you need to be clear what you're assessing. Are you assessing if you taught all the standards? Then you need to use something.

What assessment would you use?

I think (I'd use) the SAT 9. If you taught for the test, for the standardized test, then you would use the SAT 9. If you were trying to assess writing process development, then you might use the ALAS. It depends on whether you are assessing the product or the process. That's very important. There are some assessments that don't give you the information that you want. There is no assessment that tell you how a kid feels about the writing. You can have an interview, but there is nothing to tell you how proud he feels about having written the whole piece by himself. You're just going to see the written piece - the final product. ...

Also, what are you going to do with the data of the assessments? Is that data going to inform your instruction? Or is that data just going to go to a graph? Is that data going to be a number, or is it really going to make a change in your classroom? And maybe sometimes the accumulation of numbers, of graphs, will make a change in something, but I don't know. It really depends on what you are looking for, and why you are using that information. I think assessment is very important because it keeps the children, the teachers, and the principal, accountable. It's good to have assessment, but we need to be careful what we are assessing.

When and how should linguistically and culturally diverse students be assessed?

J: I think it depends. If you want to see some progress, you're supposed to assess kids when they first arrive in the country to see how they started, and what is the progress.

How should it look?

How should it look? Because the way that it looks (now) is very culturally biased.... I think it should be appropriate to the age, the language, the culture, and (it should be) an assessment that is meaningful... I would use the ALAS, even for the youngest students. But the prompt that I would use would have to be age, language, and culture appropriate. ...I would have a literacy piece that is appropriate and meaningful for the student. In which he can see his life reflected -- like in a book, or something like that - so it becomes a connection. (There is) a purpose to write about something. And I would use that for the writing assessment. (When kids first arrive in the

US) I would monitor the process, see when they acquire the second language, when they are taking the risks. (And I would assess the bilingual kids born here the same way), because if I want to see how effective my instruction is, I would like to have a baseline to say, "OK, they arrived to me like this, and this is what they are doing now. And so, what is going to be the goal?" So I would (have the school do) a writing sample every three or four months. ...For example, I find that what we are doing with the ALAS (with the) whole school is very interesting. If we agree as a community to have 3 or 4 samples during the year, I think that will give the school continuity and will put together the program - whether we're talking about Spanish bilingual, or we're talking about Chinese bilingual, and if we're talking about, "What are we doing with the English language at Chang Ching School." So I think that keeps us together. It gives us a structure, it gives us continuity, it gives us a focus. So for those purposes, I would just choose something that is not as overwhelming as a monthly sample, but I would choose 3 or 4 samples, to keep everybody accountable. I know some teachers do it every month. But I would have (monthly pieces) as part of my practice - my own assessment.

And you know what I would do too? I would do the same thing with Math. And that's what we're trying to do right now. Because I think in the writing of math, you can develop a lot of literacy.

How do you monitor your own students' progress? What tools do you use?

J: I use the ALAS, I use samples of their writing in math, so, what I try to do is, I try to see, for example, at their writing in different aspects: how does the writing of this student look in math, how does it look in science, how does it look in social studies, how does it look in writing, in the ALAS. Because we write for different purposes. So what I try to see is, in those different purposes, how does that look. Also, because I'm a Special Ed. teacher, every year I have to do an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), and so I also do standardized tests. And I can cover that too. But as I was saying, (that gives you) different data. I also use a lot of observation. Like, when you see that you have been modeling in the journals "*hermano con H*" (*hermano* [brother] with an h" all the time, and one day, they're using it, suddenly it's just there, and it stays there, so I make notes about that. Because they're getting the thing that you're teaching.

Have you been able to incorporate ALAS into other assessments you use for instructional and curriculum planning, in both L1 and L2, for language arts and other subjects? (You have a math rubric on the board. Is it the school's?)

No. I did it myself. But I think that If you set up what it is that you're looking for, it's good for you and for the students. So when you have your goals right there. (Kids can see), "OK, this is what we're looking for! (So let's try to work for this.)" So in that sense it relates to other things that I have. I tried to develop a rubric for other things.

And, I try to make that rubric clear for the students. So for the ALAS, we would take that rubric out, and we would study that rubric. For example, I would bring a piece of writing from another student from another class, and we would study that piece. We would say, "OK, what do you think is missing? what would be other things that would enrich the piece?" And then we would look at the rubric. We would just put it on the overhead... (you put the big rubric on the overhead?) Oh yeah! And we just put it right there, and I would say, "5th graders, you need to be here. Let's discuss the things they are saying here. 'Have 3 reasons or more' What does mean?" We would talk a lot about, "How can you support your main idea with 3 or more ideas? What would those be? How would that look? If this piece has 3 reasons to support the main idea, what

is the main idea?" So we'll study the rubric, so they're clear of what they're looking for, and what they're supposed to be writing.

(And you've found that when they do their own ALAS writing, does it show?)

Oh yes. We talked about quotation marks, "this gives you extra points! When you use dialogue, you need to use quotation marks!" I did this whole mini-lesson about quotation marks and dialogue, and they did the skits with the theatre (pointing to a theatre stand in the classroom). They were writing their own play using the quotation marks, then we would study the rubric, and see where the quotation marks start, and how they give you extra points, or whatever... And now they're using quotation marks. So I think if you teach it, and they know what they're using them for, and you give them something meaningful... Because the skits, kids loved them! Having their own plays, perform for the whole classroom, and have a meaning for writing it. (I told the students), "Why do we need quotation marks? Because that's when you need to talk! If you're the little bird, here's where you start talking, and if you're the dog, here's where you stop talking!" So it really makes it whole. You know?

Do you feel that you are involved in decision making processes at your school? To what extent are you involved? Why?

J: Well, well, well... I think that right now (with the new principal) we have a different process... But there are certain things that I'm glad that we had agreed on before. Like for example, the ALAS: that's one thing that I think has given us cohesion, as a whole staff - we need to have something that is part of our program. This is part of our program, and we're not going to discuss it, because we discussed it a long time ago, and we agreed that that was good!

Conclusion

The teacher interview excerpts presented here give a first look at the ways in which individual teachers, who have worked together to develop a site-based, authentic assessment, bring their own experiences to the enterprise of assessing and instructing their students. The reflections and experiences of the four teachers presented provide us with some ideas about the strengths and challenges of the ALAS as a vehicle for school-wide, instructional reform in a multilingual setting.

Further work in this longitudinal project includes asking teachers more specifically about the four aspects of the ALAS development presented at the beginning of the paper: the administration of the assessment, the creation of rubrics and anchors, the scoring process, and the formal opportunities to link ALAS data to their own instruction. Additionally, we need to examine the relationship of site-specific conditions and teachers' work. How do teachers at specific sites, with varied professional and personal experiences integrate a school-wide reform into their ongoing teaching and assessment practices? As the ALAS project enters its fifth year, we will examine such questions.