

## **Recommendations for a common interpretation of LINC levels according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks**

On March 27, 2002 the CCLB hosted a meeting, on behalf of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, of ESL experts from across Canada. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the interpretation of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) in relation to the federal Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program.

The LINC program is organized into levels commonly referred to as LINC 1, LINC 2, LINC 3, LINC 4, and LINC 5. Each LINC level provides ESL training at certain Canadian Language Benchmark levels. It is essential that LINC programs across the country have a common interpretation of what CLB levels are covered at each LINC level. This will ensure that students can transfer from one region to another and be assured that placement and achievement standards for each LINC level are the same. It also enables practitioners in each province to readily share LINC curriculum and other materials.

The group agreed that, “When a candidate is assigned a specific benchmark, it is to be assumed the student falls within the competencies of that benchmark and will work towards achievement of the complete range of defined competencies of that standard.” For example, a Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA) rating of 2 would result in placement in a CLB 2 class where the student would be working towards full achievement of the CLB 2 standard. The rationale for this recommendation is that, “When an assessment centre assigns a rating to a candidate, the rating provides a general indication of proficiency and therefore, a general indication of where the student should be placed. Participants agreed that other factors such as the student’s individual goals and teacher’s experience also played a role in effective placement. Participants indicated that the recommended interpretation is current practice and has been working very effectively. However, participants also believed that the system of placement should be flexible and enable adjustments that allow for incorporation of student goals and teacher experience. As a result, a small percentage of students may be subsequently moved to a higher CLB level once the course has started. It was estimated that this group would represent a minority of about 10-20% of students.

The advantages to this interpretation are that “it requires less change and disruption, promotes greater chance of success for students by not having them placed too high, provides greater opportunity for learning laterally, which in turn promotes greater language learning and avoids possible skill and knowledge gaps for students. Some disadvantages are that the interpretation may not satisfy the needs of high achievers, and there may be some difficulty in regions where LINC instructions cannot readily change initial placements.”

Grazyna Pawlikowska-Smith prepared the following chart in order to clarify the interpretation of CLB for each LINC level for purposes of initial placement, curriculum development and achievement and lesson the possibility of misinterpretation. The chart summarizes the recommendation of the group.

Skill Area	LINC 1 (CLB 1)	LINC 2 (CLB 2)	LINC 3 (CLB 3,4)	LINC 4 (CLB 4, 5)	LINC 5 (CLB 5, 6, 7)
Speaking	E: Pre-CLBA 1 CO: CLB 1 ES: CLB 1	E: CLBA 2 CO: CLB 2 ES: CLB 2	E: CLBA 3, 4 CO: CLB 3, 4 ES: CLB 4	E: CLBA 5 CO: CLB 5 ES: CLB 5	E: CLBA 6, 7 CO: CLB 6, 7 ES: CLB 7
Listening	E: Pre-CLBA 1 CO: CLB 1 ES: CLB 1	E: CLBA 2 CO: CLB 2 ES: CLB 2	E: CLBA 3, 4 CO: CLB 3, 4 ES: CLB 4	E: CLBA 5 CO: CLB 5 ES: CLB 5	E: CLBA 6, 7 CO: CLB 6, 7 ES: CLB 7
Reading	E: Pre-CLBA 1 CO: CLB 1 ES: CLB 1	E: CLBA 2 CO: CLB 2 ES: CLB 2	E: CLBA 3 CO: CLB 3 ES: CLB 3	E: CLBA 4 CO: CLB 4 ES: CLB 4	E: CLBA 5, 6 CO: CLB 5, 6 ES: CLB 6
Writing	E: Pre-CLBA 1 CO: CLB 1 ES: CLB 1	E: CLBA 2 CO: CLB 2 ES: CLB 2	E: CLBA 3 CO: CLB 3 ES: CLB 3	E: CLBA 4 CO: CLB 4 ES: CLB 4	E: CLBA 5, 6 CO: CLB 5, 6 ES: CLB 6

CLBA = Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment Rating  
E = Enter CO = Curriculum Objectives ES = Exit Standard

For more information or to share your thoughts or concerns, please address your comments to [pmcnaughton@language.ca](mailto:pmcnaughton@language.ca).