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Mathematical interviews to assess Latino students.

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Summary: To assess students' developing literacy, teachers regularly listen as individuals read. Similarly, listening to students talk about their mathematical reasoning is a powerful way for teachers to assess students' problem-solving abilities and mathematical understanding. Traditional paper-and-pencil tests have long been the main avenue to evaluate students' mathematical understanding, yet informal interviews with individuals or a pair of students may give the teacher a whole new insight into children's thinking about a mathematics problem. In the case of Latino students, who form the majority of the English Language Learners (ELLs) in the country, the language used in the test items makes a significant impact on performance. Thus, it is important to explore other means of assessing Latino ELLs. This article illustrates how using appropriate questioning strategies in interviews with ELLs could provide these students with opportunities to demonstrate their mathematical knowledge and offer a wealth of information that could be used to guide further instruction. Teachers can use students' strengths as resources for addressing weaknesses and misconceptions that are uncovered during the one-on-one interactions. The authors are aware that schedule constraints make conducting one-on-one or paired interviews with students quite difficult for classroom teachers. However, from such interviews, teachers potentially stand to gain an immense amount of knowledge about what the student knows and is able to do. (ERIC)

Classification: C52 C53 C62 C63 C72 C73

Keywords: test items; second language learning; problem solving; interviews; Hispanic American students; literacy; mathematical logic; language usage; evaluation methods; student evaluation; mathematics skills; scaffolding; questioning techniques