

The document “Reaching for PASS” specifies the knowledge and skills that professional language teachers need, with special attention to teaching languages in Oregon. The major areas of competence are described, the necessary level of competence is stated, and several indicators and experiences are listed to show how the proficiency might be developed.

You are completing what is probably your first methods course for language teachers. Even without reading “Reaching for PASS” you have probably been reflecting about what you did and did not learn in the course, what you have already and have not yet learned from other experiences, and what more there will and must be in your development as a professional language teacher.

In this activity you will systematize those thoughts, using “Reaching for PASS” as the principle of organization. Evaluate your current competence in each of the document’s proficiencies. Substantiate your past training and achievement by referring to your education and other relevant experience. Where you still lack competence, tell what you will need to do to acquire it.

A reflection like this could be part of your professional portfolio, to be read by someone, perhaps a department chair or a school principal, who wants more documentation of training and ability than can be found in an academic transcript. This scenario dictates the content, dimensions and presentation of your reflection. One page is simply not enough room to describe and substantiate your professional development, even if you are just beginning your training. If that is so, you will have to discuss your future development in more detail. If you already have much training and experience, you will pay more attention to the past and present than to the future (but there’s always more to learn).

Whatever the case, a real reader of your piece would not be happy having to plow through ten or more pages of probably unorganized and repetitive musing. So aim for no more than five pages. Since this is not a term paper, and also because we like trees, that means five pages single-spaced, but with text no smaller than that here (12 point Times). You may be surprised to know that double-column text saves up to 10% space over single-column text, especially when you have many phrases, sentences and paragraphs, as you might if you use a check-list or itemization format for some of your evidence. (This page has 600 words.)

But for this activity you need not introduce fancy word-processing techniques. The content is far more important than the format, and if later on you really wanted a polished portfolio you might well have a professional do that, as many people now do with their résumés. Whatever you do with format, expert word-processing does not compensate for weak content and errors in basic writing skills. Teachers can get pretty upset about errors in spelling and grammar, at least in your native language. You might ask a friend to proofread for you. Speaking of friends, as we said in a recent email, you might find it helpful to discuss your professional background and future development with someone who cares about you and maybe has a major interest in what you are doing in life.

Use the organization and style that you feel most suitable. A perfectly satisfactory procedure would be to present a meaty paragraph about each of the proficiencies, with some sort of introduction and conclusion. In some instances you might save space and increase clarity by using a “checklist” format. You could also organize by past, present and future, where you describe your professional development as it “maps” onto the “Reaching for PASS”

proficiencies. There are still other ways. But don't get eccentric or cute – no poems, no dialogs, no flashy graphics, no diatribes against society or the educational system.

Native speakers of English, please write in English. Non-native speakers of English may choose to write in French, Spanish or German. If you are an ACTFL Advanced in written English you should be able to do this activity in English. Once again, remember that if this piece were in your portfolio, most of its readers would be monolingual speakers of English. But it's your choice.

Lastly, some specific directions about what NOT to write:

- 1) This is not the place for a long autobiography. That can be in a personal statement in your portfolio. But if a personal experience helps explain your professional development, you can mention it briefly.
- 2) Don't simply describe our course. Your professional development includes , or will include, much more than that. Besides, there will be a separate course evaluation on the usual official form.
- 3) Merely mentioning a course you took, unless the title is very specific, does not prove that it contributed to your preparation as a teacher. Provide something more in at least a few instances. You might also want to tell how well you did – not just state the grade, but what it really means.
- 4) The same is true of the future. It is not sufficient just to say, for example, that you need to take a psychology course sometime. Tell what you need to get from that experience.
- 5) The larger features of your background and life-plan can be mentioned briefly, but only if they directly affect the course of your professional development. What kind of private life you want, or what part of the world

you want to live in, should go elsewhere in your portfolio.

- 6) This reflection is NOT your professional “credo,” where you present your philosophy and methodology as a language teacher. Your education and training are the focus, not your thoughts about what your students or the society should get out of learning language and culture. You can refer briefly to those thoughts, if they are of direct relevance. But your “credo” statement, when you eventually compose one, will be elsewhere in your portfolio.
- 7) Professional development is more than just taking courses. For example, if you feel that raising children has given you an understanding of first-language acquisition or learning styles, say so – but then briefly prove how systematic and thorough your knowledge is.

Your reflection is due on Friday of finals week. The due-date policy used for assignments during the quarter, where the due-day and -time were the class-period on Thursday, but where you received top credit if you sent us your work by the Tuesday before class, does NOT apply here. If we do receive your first version sufficiently ahead of Friday, such as Wednesday, we will try to read it quickly and alert you about any major problems.

You may send in your assignment by email.