Within the United States, many students do not have English as their first language. Therefore, these students are more concerned with trying to efficiently communicate and end up being referred to as illiterate or lacking grammatical skills of standard English. Writing should be about expressing one’s thoughts and feelings but many education institutions insist that writing is based upon syntax and grammar. Of course in order to write, there needs to be some basic understanding of these skills. However, Rose believes that there are different approaches to develop these skills for students who have English as a second language. Teachers are assessing how their students are learning, but fail to take cultural barriers into consideration. Mike Rose uses *The Politics of Remediation* to address these cultural barriers and offers various assessments that teachers could use to measure comprehension of the lessons.

The most prevalent issue that Rose addresses is the lack of culturally relevant curriculum in the education system. If students are neither enticed by material nor able to create relationships between the lesson and their personal life, they are less likely able to see a purpose in the assignment. Rose writes, “the curriculum was somewhat self-enclosed….it failed to elicit creatively the tales and folklore and genres that were part of their various families and cultures” (553). By failing to provide relevant material in any English class to students who are already having a difficult time in understanding the primary language, their determination to succeed likely decreases. Conversely, if teachers are giving students opportunities to be creative and integrate something native and meaningful in their writing, then, as Rose believes, students are more likely to excel. He writes that in order to guide students to enjoy and succeed in writing,
teachers should create lessons that promote “conveying something meaningful, communicating information, creating narratives, shaping what we see and feel and believe into written language” (553). Doing so will encourage students to write more because they are expressing what they truly feel in a way that they can understand. Through this writing, Rose believes that the students are practicing the rules of standard English without even thinking about it.

There is an emphasis in this article to reduce the focus of teaching students the skills of writing. Rose states that students whom do are not native to English are not introduced to the basics of standard English in their early academic years. When students are introduced to these rules and because they are so complex, students become frustrated and feel like they are failing. Rose writes that students “didn’t see the sense in such analysis…were missing it, not getting it and falling behind” (554). Students are becoming frustrated in English classes but are not illiterate; they are just learning differently and need to be given opportunities that enhance what they already know. These students know how to write and should be assessed on the material that they submit that is relevant to their own lives. Instead, students are being assessed to disassemble sentences and focus on grammatical structures; a system that they have never been introduced to before. This cultural disconnect is inaccurately and unfairly assessing children.

Rose writes about his experiences with alternatives assessments for children who do not have a strong understanding of standard English rules for writing. His goals are to allow students to express their thoughts through writing without stressing about these rules. Rose’s first example involves extra work for the teacher but helps students to focus more on their idea, and less on the deciphering of the word that was assigned to them. After reviewing the students’ writings, it is clear that they understood the words and were successful at creating elaborate stories; lo and behold, they were successful at writing. The task for the teacher is to take these
experiences and build upon them because with practice, students will manifest their knowledge through these writing assignments, rather than being assessed on something that they were never truly taught. Students should be encouraged to use their current knowledge, expand upon it through writing, and make the writing applicable to future assignments. Teachers should take their students’ knowledge into deeper consideration and assess their true abilities in expressing their thoughts and feelings, rather than their inabilitys with structural standards of the language.

Whether or not everyone in a classroom understands what verb tense means, what singular versus plural nouns are or when to use certain punctuations, all students have the ability to communicate under most circumstances. Blind, deaf, illiterate, or having English as a second language, all students have thoughts and feelings, and express them differently. It is not fair to assess all students under the same criteria if all students have not been taught and have not learned the same material. It is unfair to suggest that all students should be able to identify the rules of standard English by a certain time. The assessments that should be taking place should be on how elaborate a student’s thought can be conveyed. Rose does a fine job in conveying a method that allows students to be assessed on their abilities to write by taking their cultural background into consideration.
Works Cited