



Front Desk

A Cross-Curricular Novel Study
for the book by Kelly Yang



Frontloading Activities



FRONTLOADING ACTIVITIES TO ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE



Frontloading Activities

Studies have shown that students understand more of the themes of a story if they have had the opportunity to build their own background knowledge beforehand, and the "frontloading" activities found in this resource provide rich experiences for your students in this regard. Choose the one/s that you feel will be most beneficial for your own class, or if time permits, you may want to do both activities.

1. **Tea Party:** The main character of *Front Desk* is Mia, a ten year old girl living in a small motel her parents manage for the owner. I have taken 32 quotations from the text, putting each one on a separate strip. To prepare for this activity, cut out the quotation out for distribution.

Randomly distribute one sentence to each student, and have students mingle as they read their sentences to one another. Students should be making predictions about the storyline, characters, problems, and relationships among the different characters. Allow 5-10 minutes, and then have students share their ideas about the story, and give reasons for their predictions.

2. **Value Cards:** This activity helps students think about the trade-offs people have to make in order to get the things we want, and how each person's value system is at work in making the decisions behind the trade-offs. By pursuing one value (sports, for example), we often have to give up some others (such as academics). In this activity, each student receives a set of three random value cards. Students think about how important each of the values he/she received is, and what values are missing that they might be willing to trade for.

Have students walk around the room, discussing their cards with each other, exchanging cards for the values they most interested in. Draw the activity to a close when you see that they are looking satisfied with their cards. As a whole group, discuss what they were willing to give up to get what they wanted. Have students write a paragraph about one value they would never give up and why that is so important.

Mention that value systems will be evident in the new read-aloud you are about to begin, and that they should be listening for this each day.

You may want to repeat this Value Card exercise when you finish the book. Students may find that their values may have changed somewhat after hearing the perspectives of the characters in the book!

35 SENTENCE STRIPS

Tea Party

"You should be spending more time doing math. Something you can actually get good at."

If we owned the motel I could put up a sign that says *Sorry I'm sleeping. Come back in the morning.*

"You know what you are in English? You're a bicycle, and the other kids are cars."

She would listen in on her brother's lesson every week. If the tutor assigned homework, she would secretly do the homework.

"No way!" My mom screwed up her face. "I'm not going to ask my sister for money!"

"But it's not that simple. I've been lying to my sisters about how great our life here is," my mom confessed.

"Have you ever seen anybody in this country do something out of the goodness of their heart?"

Why was it that everything in America had to do with money?

Value Cards

health	nice home
fancy car	artistic ability
respect	having a job
friendship	athleticism
being popular	being famous
family	good marks at school

31 VALUE CARDS



Flipbook Templates

In this section you will find two sets of flipbook templates for you to use with your students. The first set is blank, for student use, and the second set is completed as a sample for you to get an idea of how your students might respond to each page.

There are two possible approaches to these flipbooks:

- a. Distribute the entire flipbooks at once (either distribute all the sheets and have students cut and assemble the booklets themselves OR preassemble them yourself before distributing). With this method, you could have students keep the flipbooks in their desks and then allow them a short time period at the end of each read-aloud session to work independently on whichever section of the flipbook seems appropriate to them.
- b. Distribute each page separately, when you want to focus on a particular topic. For example, you may want to teach a direct lesson on idioms before having students complete that page in the flipbook. With this approach, you may want to collect each page at the end of the period and keep all pages with you. At the end of the unit you can hand back the pages for students to assemble and staple.

Front Desk



Name: _____

Secrets

Money-Saving Tips

Initiative

Idioms

Language vs Math

Roller Coaster of Life

Public Service Poster

**FLIPBOOK FOR
STUDENTS TO
USE AT THE
END OF DAILY
READ-ALOUD
TIME**

Front Desk

Name: _____

CUT ALONG DASHED GUIDELINE

Instructions:

- Draw at least 3 important symbols from the book *Front Desk*.

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Who (Who is keeping the secret?)	What (What is the secret?)	Why (Why is the character keeping this a secret?)

Secrets

CUT ALONG DASHED GUIDELINE

Instructions:

- Many characters in *Front Desk* keep secrets from others. Fill in the chart to show:
 - 3 different characters who are keeping a secret
 - The secret that is being kept by each character
 - Why the character is keeping that particular secret.

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Money-Saving Tips

CUT ALONG DASHED GUIDELINE

Instructions:

- Most of the characters in *Front Desk* don't have much money. Create a list of ideas from the book that could be given to new immigrants to show them how to live economically so that they don't have to spend all the money they earn.

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Initiative

CUT ALONG DASHED GUIDELINE

Instructions:

- The main character of *Front Desk*, 10-year-old Mia, is always thinking of new ways to get ahead in life. That's known as initiative. Pretend you are Mia and record as many of her ideas as you can!

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Idiom

Explanation

Sentence

Idioms

CUT ALONG DASHED GUIDELINE

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English

Math

Language vs Math

CUT ALONG DASHED GUIDELINE

Instructions:

- In *Front Desk*, Mia struggles with her feelings about the usefulness of both written English and math. Fill in the chart to record examples of when Mia puts both of these academic subjects to work for her.

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Roller Coaster of Life

- Instructions: Mia and Lupe use roller coasters as an **analogy** for life. Draw a picture of a roller coaster and put captions to show the high and low points of Mia's story.

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Public Service Announcement

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Front Desk



FLIPBOOK EXAMPLES FOR EACH TEMPLATE

Name _____

Who (Who is keeping the secret?)	What What is the secret?	Why Why is the character keeping this a secret?
Mia	She lives in a motel with her parents, and she can't even swim in the pool.	I think that Mia feels centered out in her class as she is one of only 2 Asians in her class, and she wants to fit in with the other students. She is ashamed of living in the motel.

Instructions:
• Draw at least 3 things you like about the story.

Mom & Dad

Lupe

Instructions:

Mar

Fill in

• S

• T

• V

Instructions:
The main character
ways to get ahead
and record as

Mia's To-Do List

Idiom	Explanation	Sentence
IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER	THIS MEANS THAT A PERSON ISN'T REALLY PAYING ATTENTION TO	MR. WILLIAM'S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE 3 RD BASEMAN WENT IN

YOU CAN'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

TRAIN OF THOUGHT

Instructions: An idiom is a phrase that it appears to mean but that it is easy.

English	Math
<input type="checkbox"/> Creates feedback cards for guests. <input type="checkbox"/> Make a list of the hotel's amenities. <input type="checkbox"/> Write a letter to the hotel's manager. <input type="checkbox"/> Use a map to find the hotel's location. <input type="checkbox"/> Write a phrase to describe the hotel's atmosphere. <input type="checkbox"/> Write a function to describe the hotel's services.	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes change for motel guests. <input type="checkbox"/> Learns about loan sharks & how to avoid them.

Mr. Yao hires Mia's parents.



Mia is swimming in the pool.

Instructions:

Instructions: Mia and her family are going to the roller coaster and pool.

HELP FOR IMMIGRANTS

Your Rights:
You have the right to:

- Live anywhere in Canada
- Practice your religion
- Receive services from the Government of Canada
- A safe workplace
- To be paid for your work



Call For Help

- Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada: 1-888-242-2100
- Emergency Services: 911
- Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization: 613-725-00202

Websites

- The Government of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/protect-fraud/know-your-rights.html>
- The Government of Ontario: Services for Newcomers and Refugees: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/services-newcomers-and-refugees>

Public Service Poster

Instructions: Plan a poster or announcement giving important advice to new immigrants to your country.

Key Events by Chapter

Chapter	Key Events
1	Mia Tongs' parents are hired by Mr. Yao to manage a motel in Anaheim CA.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia's family moves into the <i>Calivista Motel</i>. Mr. Yao, the motel owner, warns Mia's parents not to let in any "bad guys". Mia meets Hank, one of the "weeklies".
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Yao tell Mia's family they can't use the pool. Mia meets the other weeklies: Billy Bob, Fred, Mrs. Q and Mrs. T.
4	Mia's parents are hired by Mr. Yao to manage a motel in Anaheim CA.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia's family moves into the <i>Calivista Motel</i>. Mr. Yao, the motel owner, warns Mia's parents not to let in any "bad guys". Mia meets Hank, one of the "weeklies".
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia's family moves into the <i>Calivista Motel</i>. Mr. Yao, the motel owner, warns Mia's parents not to let in any "bad guys". Mia meets Hank, one of the "weeklies".
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ta ha Mia
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia Mia
9	The v
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia Mia
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Un Mia he
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A of
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia Mia
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Ja
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia "U the
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia Mia fo ha

Questions, Questions - Part I

Name: _____

Multiple Choice: Circle the correct answer for each question.

In the sentence below, what kind of word is "Hey"?

"Hey, what's going on?" he hollered.

- a) verb
b) noun
c) adjective
d) interjection

Open Response:

Use information from the text to answer the question.

1. What do we know about Mia's family?

Questions, Questions - Part I A

Name: _____

Multiple Choice: Circle the correct answer for each question.

In the sentence below, what kind of word is "Hey"?

"Hey, what's going on?" he hollered.

- a) verb
b) noun
c) adjective
d) interjection

Why did Mia decide to use Cheerios when she was hungry?

- a) She is tired of eating Cheerios.
b) Honey Nut Cheerios.
c) The box is too full.
d) She isn't hungry.

Lesson: Symbolism

Open Response:

Use information from the text to answer the question.

1. What do we know about Mia's family?

Symbolism is a figure of speech where an object has a meaning other than its literal meaning. Kelly uses symbolism to help readers think more deeply about the concepts being discussed. Your students may need some direct instruction on this technique as it is used in *Front Desk*.

Materials:

- Your school logo/symbol
- Common Symbols sheet (display only)
- Chart paper

Instructions:

- Display particular symbols on chart paper.
- Explain the literal meaning of each symbol.
- Explain the symbolic meaning of each symbol.
- Start a class discussion about the symbols.
- If you have time, have students create their own symbols.

Mia's dad was the 1984 Olympic champion, and it was because of him that Mia's family moved to Anaheim.

Section I: Chapters I-I6 Pages I-77



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I HAVE DIVIDED THE BOOK INTO FOUR SECTIONS, EACH HAVING:

- CHAPTER SUMMARIES
- MULTIPLE CHOICE & OPEN RESPONSE QUESTIONS (WITH ANSWER SHEETS)
- CROSS-CURRICULAR LESSONS

Common Symbols

Some objects are symbols representing ideas or emotions. What might these symbols represent?



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Key Events by Chapter	
Chapter	Key Event/s
17	Lupe tells Mia the truth about her family.
18	Lupe explains her roller coaster theory to Mia.
19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia figures out how much money Mr. Yao is making on the motel. The school librarian tells Mia about the motel giveaway.
20	Mia's mom tells her that she is wasting her time on English, because she will never use it.
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A hotel The pool used to
22	Jason tells
23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hank is The sev custo
24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia ad the nig
25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aunt Li Aunt Li Immigr
26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lupe te Hank d
27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia ge Mia sa Lupe tr
28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia ge telling Mia us Mrs. Ta Instea
29	Jason rel
30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hank d Mr. Yao
31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Uncle Mia's p
32	Mrs. Doug
33	Mia's mo
34	Mia's da

Questions, Questions - Part 2

Name: _____

Multiple Choice: Circle the correct answer for each question.

What type of sentence is this: "What about the fact that he's evil and I'm not?"

a) Declarative
b) Interrogative
c) Exclamatory
d) Imperative

What does Mrs. Tang mean when she says that Mia is "a bicycle, and the other kids are cars?"

a) Mia's English isn't as good as the other

Questions, Questions - Part 2 - ANSWERS

Name: _____

Multiple Choice: Circle the correct answer for each question.

What type of sentence is this: "What about the fact that he's evil and I'm not?"

a) Declarative
b) Interrogative
c) Exclamatory
d) Imperative

What does Mrs. Tang mean when she says that Mia is "a bicycle, and the other kids are cars?"

a) Mia's English isn't as good as the other

Drama: Tableaux

In Chapter 28 of *Front Desk*, Mrs. Tang is asked by a couple of motel guests to take their picture for them. She is excited to help, but is embarrassed when the woman criticizes her for saying "Eggplant" instead of "Cheese" before taking the picture.

This scene is the perfect opportunity for your students to become part of the story through a tableau.

Tableaux Success Criteria

Name: _____

Instructions:

- Read story
- Put student
- Have gro
- Tell stud
- Tell Mrs. T
- Group me
- Group me
- Group me
- Each gro
- After eve
- How diffi
- What did

Materials:

- None

Lesson: What is Privilege?

In Chapter 18 Mia's friend Lupe explains her "roller coaster" theory of life: America has two roller coasters, one for rich people and the other for poor people. She uses a roller coaster as a symbol for life pathways, and feels that it is very difficult for poor people to become rich and successful. Mia wonders what "successful" means in America, and suggests that everyone may have their own criteria for what qualifies as a successful life.

At the heart of this lesson is the idea of privilege. America (or any country) has advantages and disadvantages. After moving to America, Mia's life is a roller coaster.

What Success Means to Me!

Name: _____

I think success means

What Success Means to Me!

Name: _____

I think success means

Section 2: Chapters 17-34 Pages 78-149

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Key Events by Chapter

Chapter	Key Events
35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia creates a book of American phrases & customs for Uncle Fung. Lupe, Mia & the weeklies go out for Halloween.
36	Mia and her mom run into Mrs. Yao and Jason while shopping at Macy's.
37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia interrogates Jason in his role in the <u>Hotseat</u> about unfair labor practices. Mia explains about Chinese restaurant customs.
38	Jason steals Mia's pencil.
39	Mia tries to convince Lupe to steal her pencil back from Jason's house while his family is away.
40	
41	
42	
43	
44	
45	
46	
47	
48	
49	
50	
51	

Questions, Questions - Part 3

Name: _____

Multiple Choice: Circle the correct answer for each question.

- Why does Aunt Ling say that the American customers in the nail salon didn't even see her?
- a) The women had masks over their eyes.
b) Aunt Ling was kneeling and they couldn't see her.
c) The women didn't treat her as a human.
d) The women didn't like her.
- Why is *ma fan* written in italics in this sentence?
What's *ma fan* mean?" he asked.
a. It's a different language.
b. It's not spelled correctly.

Open Response:

Use information from the text to answer the question.

1. Why is Mrs. Tang so upset about the mall?

2. What does Mia's dad mean when he says "but she's free?"

Questions, Questions - Part 3 ANSWERS

Name: _____

Multiple Choice: Circle the correct answer for each question.

- Why does Aunt Ling say that the American customers in the nail salon didn't even see her?
- a) The women had masks over their eyes.
b) Aunt Ling was kneeling and they couldn't see her.
c) The women didn't treat her as a human.
d) The women didn't like her.
- Why is *ma fan* written in italics in this sentence?
What's *ma fan* mean?" he asked.
a. It's a different language.
b. It's not spelled correctly.

Open Response:

Use information from the text to answer the question.

1. Why is Mrs. Tang so upset about the mall?

Mia's mom is upset because she has more money than she can handle. She doesn't really have the money to decide to pay for the mall.

2. What does Mia's dad mean when he says "but she's free?"

Mia's dad means that she is free to do what she wants. He is saying that she is not a slave to the people in China. He is saying that she is free to be a person.

Section 3: Chapters 35-51 Pages 150-217



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Drama: Good Angel/Bad Angel

In Chapter 36 of *Front Desk*, Mia and her mother go "window shopping" at a local mall. Mrs. Tang has brought along some empty high-end shopping bags that had found in the parking lot on a previous occasion. She stuffed them with toilet paper for she and Mia to carry as they walk around the mall because she felt that "people are nicer to you if you walk around with a shopping bag".

After encountering Jason Yao and his mother, Mrs. Tang is distraught. She worries that Mrs. Yao will tell her husband that the Tangs must have more money than he thought, and that he might then reduce their salaries even more. Mia sees that her mother is very upset that her family has so little money, and she thinks about the tip money she has been secretly keeping from her parents.

Once again, I think

This is the perfect pair to choose to do about the parents to help with the

Tell students that you are from your "guardian angel" to serve as "good angels" to want to have some "angels" urging a character to

As Mia, seat yourself at your dilemma, and as



When the "angels" are allow your students to idea that different pe

Lesson - Writing/Synonyms

Mia is a very motivated writer who strengthens her writing skills throughout the book as she writes to various people with specific purposes. She uses what she calls a "dictionary-thesaurus" to help her find the most appropriate words for her writing.

By the time Mia writes a letter of reference for Hank in Chapter 43, she is very careful to use words that she feels an adult, rather than a child, would use.

Materials:

- Copy of the reference letter Mia wrote for Hank (NOTE: I can not include the letter in this resource due to copyright restrictions. You will need to either use a document camera and projector to display it from the book, or utilize an overhead projector.)
- One piece of paper
- Thesaurus

Instructions:

- Display a copy of the letter that might be missing.
- Have students write someone will good time to
- Discuss some a thesaurus
- If students have a dictionary
- You may want to
- Distribute a list of students share
- Practice with
- Explain that
- Have students

Lesson: Idioms in Front Desk

An idiom is an expression or phrase that means something different from what it says. For example, if something is a "piece of cake" that means that it is easy.

Front Desk has many idioms, and they are challenging for the Chinese immigrants to understand. In Chapter 35, Mia actually creates an American Phrases and Customs pamphlet for Uncle Fung to use!

During your daily read-alouds, suggest to students that they listen for such idioms, and keep a class chart of them to discuss. In the flipbook note that there is a section on idioms that they will need to complete at some point. Ensure that all students know how to complete this page.

Idioms in Front Desk

- Fired on the spot
- The bottom line
- Get out of here!
- A train of thought
- A blanket of snow
- Take it or leave it
- Teacher's pet
- My mind was racing
- Not just fun and games
- Just hear me out
- In a heartbeat
- Suit yourself
- Riding shotgun
- Take matters into your own hands
- Judge a book by its cover
- All fun and games
- Cut out for this
- Cash cow
- Throw someone under the bus
- No skin off my back
- Head in the clouds

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Key Events by Chapter

Chapter	Key Events
52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncle Zhang gets his documents back from his employer. Mrs. Douglas asks the class to write about a "small moment".
53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia has Hank sell her dad's coin collection to get money for the motel contest. Mia writes her essay for the contest.
54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia asks Jason to stop bullying the supply teacher, and tells him he doesn't need to act like his father.

Questions, Questions - Part 4

Name: _____

Multiple Choice: Circle the correct answer for each question.

- Why does Mrs. Tang decide to ask her sister for money?
- Which of the words should NOT start with a capital letter?
- a) The Tangs have lost all their money.
b) Mrs. Tang wants to tell her sister the truth about her life.
c) Hank showed Mrs. Tang that Mia would never give up on an idea.
d) Mrs. Tang is lonely.
- a. Jason
b. America
c. Office
d. Calivista

Open Response:

Use information from the text.

1. Authors usually have a purpose. What do you think Kelly Yang's purpose is?

Questions, Questions - Part 4 ANSWERS

Name: _____

Multiple Choice: Circle the correct answer for each question.

- Why does Mrs. Tang decide to ask her sister for money?
- Which of the words should NOT start with a capital letter?
- a) The Tangs have lost all their money.
b) Mrs. Tang wants to tell her sister the truth about her life.
c) Hank showed Mrs. Tang that Mia would never give up on an idea.
d) Mrs. Tang is lonely.
- a. Jason
b. America
c. Office
d. Calivista

Open Response:

Use information from the text.

1. Authors usually have a purpose. What do you think Kelly Yang's purpose is?

I think that the author, Kelly Yang, has faced many of the same challenges that people will face in the future.

2. How do Mia's writing skills help her?

Mia becomes a better writer because she borrows a dictionary from the motel, and she uses it to look up words.

Drama: Inner Voice

At the end of Chapter 54 of *Front Desk*, Mia encounters a challenge. She is forced to return a pair of jeans that a previous guest had left behind. She is frustrated and humiliated, but cannot give voice to her real thoughts.

The drama technique *Inner Voice* allows students to explore the idea that people are not always free to express exactly what they are feeling in all situations. Many times we worry that saying what we really feel and think will hurt someone else, or that the consequences of expressing these feelings might be too great. People might misunderstand us. Or we may have something to hide, and we really don't want people to discover our secret.

In *Inner Voices*, we allow students to articulate what Mia might really be feeling or thinking. In introducing this technique, have a student take on the role of Mia, saying out loud the things that are "safe" for her to say. Then, standing at "Mia's" shoulder, give voice to what she may really be thinking, feeling, and outer voices.

Lesson: Public Service Announcement Poster

You may want to have students work in pairs. One student will be Mia, and the other student will be a friend. They will discuss what all students would react to if they saw a poster like this.



Materials:

- Examples of public service announcement-type posters (Your school likely has many throughout the building.)
- Optional: [Examples of student submissions to a Carbon Monoxide Warning Poster Contest](#)
- Poster board
- Public Service Announcement Rubric

Instructions:

- Ask students if they have seen any public service announcements.
- Have students think about what a public service announcement is. How is it different from a poster? How is it similar?
- Together, make a list of things that immigrants would need to know about when they come to a new country.
- Explain that each student will create a poster for one of the things on the list.

- Title
- Colorful, eye-catching
- True facts and information
- Real website information
- Real phone numbers

- Display any examples of public service announcements and have students discuss what they like and don't like. Consider adding criteria.
- Show students the poster they will be creating.
- Have students create their posters and explain how they created them.
- Allow time on a day when students can work on their posters.

Section 4: Chapters 52-67 Pages 218-286



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Public Service Announcement Rubric

Name: _____

Category	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Knowledge & Understanding	Shows a limited understanding of the types of information required on the poster	Shows some understanding of the types of information required on the poster	Shows considerable understanding of the types of information required on the poster	Shows a thorough understanding of the types of information required on the poster
Thinking	Uses planning skills (generating ideas, gathering information, & organizing information) with limited effectiveness	Uses planning skills (generating ideas, gathering information, & organizing information) with some effectiveness	Uses planning skills (generating ideas, gathering information, & organizing information) with considerable effectiveness	Uses planning skills (generating ideas, gathering information, & organizing information) with a high degree of effectiveness
Communication	Communicates for a specific audience (new immigrants) with limited effectiveness	Communicates for a specific audience (new immigrants) with some effectiveness	Communicates for a specific audience (new immigrants) with considerable effectiveness	Communicates for a specific audience (new immigrants) with a high degree of effectiveness
Application	Transfers knowledge gained from <i>Front Desk</i> to poster with limited effectiveness	Transfers knowledge gained from <i>Front Desk</i> to poster with some effectiveness	Transfers knowledge gained from <i>Front Desk</i> to poster with considerable effectiveness	Transfers knowledge gained from <i>Front Desk</i> to poster with a high degree of effectiveness

Comments: