

Chapter 2

Assessment of Progress in Literacy

Focus Questions

- How is assessment different from evaluation?
- What types of literacy assessment can be used in grades 4–8?
- In what ways can literacy assessment inform instruction?

Key Concepts

- *Assessment* is the process of gathering information (data) about students' abilities that will help teachers, parents, and other caregivers know more about a student's strengths and weaknesses so they may provide appropriate instruction or assistance for the student. As such, assessment certainly can include tests since they provide one piece of data, but assessment is about more than just testing.
- The following six principles of assessment reveal a reciprocal, synergistic relationship between assessment and teaching. Assessment should (1) have daily observations as its core, (2) take many different forms, (3) avoid cultural bias, (4) engage students actively in the assessment process, (5) focus on students' abilities, and (6) be used to inform instruction.
- Literacy assessment devices that provide a teacher with information directly applicable to instructional planning are numerous and include informal reading inventories, running records, interest and attitude surveys, interviews, teacher-made activities such as cloze tests, curriculum material placement tests, retelling tasks, word list and spelling tests, and written teacher observation procedures such as checklists, anecdotal notes, and scoring rubrics. Instructional lessons themselves are inextricably intertwined with direct assessment, as teaching and assessing continually inform one another.
- Teachers and students work together toward literacy development so they each have responsibilities for managing assessment data that documents that development. Portfolios offer a management system for classroom work. They provide a way for students to take on some responsibility for organizing and self-evaluating their work.

Essential Vocabulary

analytic approach
anecdotal notes
assessment
authentic assessment

cloze test
criterion-referenced tests
curriculum-based assessment
electronic portfolio
evaluation
formative assessment
frustration level
holistic approach
independent level
informal reading inventory (IRI)
instructional level
interest and attitude inventories
miscues
miscue analysis
norm-referenced tests
percentile scores
performance descriptors
portfolio
process-oriented assessment
reading capacity level
reliability
retelling
running records
scoring rubric
showcase portfolio
standard deviation
standard error of measurement
standards-based performance assessment
standardized testing
stanine scores
summative assessment
validity
working portfolio
writing folder

In-Class Discussion and Activities

1. Have students write a reflective piece about one positive and one negative experience they have had with assessments or testing. Ask them to analyze their feelings about these experiences and what made the experience positive or negative.
2. Show in class a video clip of a middle-grade student reading a graded passage, perhaps from YouTube, or arrange to watch a student at your cooperating school.

Provide a copy of the passage for your students so they can record oral reading behaviors. Discuss the miscues and the reasons the youngster may have made the miscue. Analyze each miscue according to the cue systems being demonstrated.

3. Provide samples of one middle-grade student's writing over time. Using the same genre is best for the analysis; the sample could consist of multiple drafts of the same essay or a writing artifact from early in the school year compared to one from later in the year. Analyze the samples using the scoring rubric that is used in the local school districts. Discuss the student's demonstrated growth and any strengths and weaknesses, and then brainstorm recommendations for future instruction.

Test Questions

Multiple Choice

1. All assessment tools have a key focus. Which of the following is an assessment tool that records coding of a student's oral reading behaviors and gauges the student's errors in the context of the language cue systems?
 - a. Cloze tests
 - b. Running records
 - c. Standardized tests
 - d. Portfolios
2. A reading attitude survey would provide a teacher with the following information about a student, EXCEPT:
 - a. The types of books s/he likes
 - b. How the student feels about reading at home
 - c. Student comprehension level of books read at home
 - d. How the student feels about reading in school
3. One portion of an oral reading from an informal reading inventory (IRI) passage revealed the following miscue:

TEXT: "Perhaps your mother is right, Margaret," her father said.
STUDENT: "Probably your mother is right, Margaret," her father said.

Which of the following language cue systems are being used by the student?

 - a. Only graphophonemic (visual)
 - b. Only semantic (meaning)
 - c. Only syntactic (structure)
 - d. Semantic and syntactic
4. One portion of an oral reading from an informal reading inventory (IRI) passage revealed the following miscue:

TEXT: But all she saw were the cars and trucks racing along the busy road.

STUDENT: But all she saw were the cars and trucks raising along the busy road.
Which of the following language cue systems are being used by the student?

- a. Only graphophonemic (visual)
 - b. Graphophonemic and syntactic
 - c. Only syntactic (structure)
 - d. Semantic and syntactic
5. How can a retelling be beneficial to assessing reading comprehension?
- a. The student's recall of passage elements is made apparent.
 - b. A retelling provides an oral gauge of fluency.
 - c. A retelling aids the teacher in observing a student's speaking and listening skills.
 - d. Retellings highlight summarization skills.
6. Which of the following is true of a student who recognizes about 95% of the words in a passage and understands 75%?
- a. She has almost no chance of comprehending what she is reading.
 - b. She is reading at the frustration level.
 - c. She is reading at the instructional level.
 - d. She is reading at the independent level.
7. The following types of student reading assessments would be helpful to parents or caregivers when they accompany the review of reading scores from a standardized test, EXCEPT:
- a. Ranking of students in the class
 - b. Running record data
 - c. Retelling comprehension checklists
 - d. Dated observation notes
8. What would be the most effective usage of the information gathered from a miscue analysis?
- a. This information will best be used to obtain the average in reading grades for the upcoming report card.
 - b. The teacher will be able to take these scores and put them in the student's portfolio as an indicator of how well each student reads. No follow-up miscue analysis is necessary until the school district requests the data again.
 - c. The data from the miscue analysis will provide a basis for instructional strategies needed for each student on an individual basis. The data can also be used to provide information for placing students in small reading groups according to need.
 - d. The classroom curriculum should be based on the teacher's manual for the language arts program. All students should be reading in the designated text

during the language arts period. The miscue analysis will point out the students who need to do more re-reading in each reading unit.

9. Of the following, which one does NOT describe assessment?
 - a. A process of gathering information about student abilities
 - b. Collecting information solely from standardized tests
 - c. A process of looking at how instruction impacts student learning
 - d. Students performing to a set of identified criteria
10. What is at the core of assessment?
 - a. Testing
 - b. Identifying student weaknesses
 - c. Teacher initiated and evaluated
 - d. Daily observation
11. In what way does a rubric function in a classroom, grade level, or department?
 - a. It helps students judge their product or performance.
 - b. It helps teachers provide clear, focused expectations for the learner.
 - c. It is a means to communicate to parents about expectations and progress of skills and knowledge.
 - d. All of the above.
12. Which of the following is the best definition of *portfolio*, as used by teachers in middle grades?
 - a. A way to keep one's finances in order
 - b. A collection of artifacts accompanied by reflection about why the piece was selected.
 - c. A big box to hold important papers
 - d. A system of writing

Fill in the Blanks

1. Artifacts in the _____ are few in number but represent a student's best efforts and are accompanied by a reflective statement that explains the importance or value of the artifact to the owner.
2. Teachers in grades 4–8 may wish to periodically and informally assess their students' recognition of particular words and especially their use of _____ often found in polysyllabic words.
3. The _____ is the place where students keep all their rough drafts in various stages of the writing process and other daily compositions or reports, topics for future pieces they might like to write, and notes from minilessons.

4. Establishing whether or not a text is at the appropriate instructional level for a student using a cloze test is referred to as establishing _____.
5. A _____ describes the levels of performance that a student must demonstrate relative to a particular achievement goal, whether the performance is written or oral.
6. Useful _____ describe specific events, report rather than evaluate, and relate the events to other information about the student.
7. _____ are scores that have been converted into nine equally spaced units, with 1 being low and 9 being high.
8. _____ tests have been administered to a large group of students, representative of those for whom the test is intended.
9. A teacher's direct observations of the student's actual reading and writing abilities for the purpose of noting which specific behaviors or strategies a student uses is known as _____.
10. A test that actually measures what it claims to be measuring is said to have _____.

Essay Questions

1. You are planning for the first weeks of the school year and need to know more about your students' literacy abilities. What three assessment tools would benefit you most at this point in the school year? Explain how you would use the results of these instruments to help you make further instructional decisions.
2. What would you say to a parent who is asking you to interpret his child's standardized test scores? The student has received a percentile score of 65 on Word Analysis, a percentile score of 35 on Reading Vocabulary, and a percentile score of 45 on Reading Comprehension.
3. Ms. Markey teaches fourth grade. Of her twenty students, five are English learners. Three speak Spanish and two speak Russian as their primary language. All are making good progress in acquiring oral English. She has administered an informal reading inventory in English to all five students, and the results show that three of these students have an instructional reading level of grade three and two have an instructional reading level of grade one. How should Ms. Markey organize and monitor the reading instruction she provides to these five students?

4. Describe how you would consider designing an electronic portfolio for your students. What would work in your school and classroom setting? Are there any limitations to using this method for creating a system to maintain students' writing over time?
5. The Common Core standards differ from previous standards and call for three key shifts for implementation in the language arts: (1) Regular practice with *complex texts* and academic language; (2) reading, writing, and speaking that is grounded in evidence from both literary and informational texts; and (3) building knowledge through content rich nonfiction. With these three shifts in mind, imagine how you and your teacher-team would discuss the ways in which you already include these shifts in your classroom and school and to what extent you need to develop them further. (For more information: www.corestandards.org/other-resources/key-shifts-in-english-language-arts/)

Answers to Test Questions

Multiple Choice

1. b
2. c
3. d
4. b
5. a
6. c
7. a
8. c
9. b
10. d
11. d
12. b

Fill in the Blanks

1. showcase portfolio
2. structural elements
3. writing folder
4. suitability
5. scoring rubric
6. anecdotal notes
7. Stanines
8. Norm-referenced (or standardized)
9. process-oriented assessment
10. validity