

Workshop 8

Assessment and Accountability

“The most useful information for teachers is assessment information gathered in the course of daily classroom routines. The purpose of this assessment is to improve instruction and help students become better readers and writers.”

Kathryn Au
Professor of Education
University of Hawaii

How can assessment improve students’ reading and writing? How do teachers assess student performance as they teach? In this session, literacy expert Kathryn Au discusses the importance of integrating assessment practices with classroom instruction on a daily basis. You will learn how to use assessment results to plan instruction, improve students’ reading and writing, and prepare students for high-stakes testing.

Learning Goals

At the end of this session, you will better understand how to:

- use daily instructional time to assess students’ reading and writing
- use grade-level benchmarks to develop appropriate assessments
- collect assessment information using anecdotal records, rubrics, and literacy portfolios
- effectively prepare students for high-stakes testing within daily instructional routines
- use assessment results to plan and improve instruction for your students

Materials Needed

- the Assessment Chart found at the end of this chapter
- the Examine the Literature Response Chart found at the end of this chapter
- articles: “Focused Anecdotal Records Assignment: A Tool for Standards-Based, Authentic Assessment,” “Literacy Assessment and the Future,” and “Assessment Conversations” found on the *Teaching Reading 3-5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/teachreading35
- the Sample Rubric found at the end of this chapter
- a journal or notebook

Facilitator: You may want to have several copies of charts and articles available for participants without Internet access.

Before You Watch

Session Preparation

To prepare for this workshop session, you will review the key terms, identify the strategies that you already use, and then read three articles on effective assessment practices.

Facilitator: Have participants complete these activities before arriving for the session.

Key Terms

- Anecdotal records
- Assessment
- Benchmarks
- High-stakes testing
- Portfolio assessment
- Rubrics

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary in the Appendix.



Notebook

What Do You Do?

To complete this activity, use the Assessment Chart found at the end of this chapter.

Meaningful learning occurs when teachers routinely assess student performance and use the results of those assessments to plan instruction that meets the needs of the range of learners in their classrooms. Think about how you assess your students' performance and growth in reading and writing. Use the Assessment Chart to outline your assessment practices and the challenges (performing and interpreting assessments, finding enough time, etc.) you encounter. Think about these questions before completing the chart:

1. What do you want to know about your students' reading and writing?
2. What formal and informal assessments do you currently use to determine your students' reading levels and instructional needs?
3. How do you use assessment results?

Now complete the Assessment Chart to document the assessments you use to measure the various components of reading development and the challenges each poses for you. If you are taking this workshop for credit, save your chart for your Literacy Practices Portfolio.



Assignment

Examine the Literature

To complete this activity, use the Examine the Literature Response Chart found at the end of this chapter.

Read each article listed below, recording your ideas on the chart during and after reading. When you have finished, save your written work to submit as an assignment.

These articles can be found as downloadable PDFs on the *Teaching Reading 3-5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/teachreading35.

Before You Watch, cont'd.

Focused Anecdotal Records Assessment: A Tool for Standards-Based, Authentic Assessment

This article describes routines and guidelines for using content standards as a focus for developing anecdotal records.

Boyd-Batstone, P. "Focused Anecdotal Records Assessment: A Tool for Standards-Based, Authentic Assessment." *The Reading Teacher* 56, no. 3 (2004): 230-239.

Literacy Assessment and the Future

This article focuses on the kinds of literacies that are important to acquire and assess in our rapidly changing world.

Johnston, P. "Literacy Assessment and the Future." *The Reading Teacher* 58, no. 7 (2005): 684-686.

Assessment Conversations

This article explores how teachers can engage in conversations with students that inform teaching and learning.

Johnston, P. "Assessment Conversations." *The Reading Teacher* 57, no. 1 (2003): 90-92.

Analyze the Video

Facilitator: When the workshop session begins, you may want to spend a few minutes discussing the key terms, participants' prior knowledge, and the readings.

Video Summary

In this video, Professor Kathryn Au discusses standards, benchmarks, rubrics, portfolios, and high-stakes tests. You will also see classroom examples that illustrate the strategies and research Professor Au describes. As you watch the video, consider the following questions:

- How do standards and benchmarks inform assessment?
- What role can students play in their assessment?
- How can teachers prepare for high-stakes tests?
- How does assessment focus instruction?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.



Notebook

Watch the Video

Watch the video, "Assessment and Accountability," taking notes as you watch. After you watch, jot down your answers to the questions below. If you prefer to watch the video in segments, pause the video when you see the next chapter heading.

Video Segment 1: How Do Standards and Benchmarks Inform Assessments? (approximate times: 00:00-10:00): If you are watching the video in segments, you will find this image at the beginning of the video.

In this segment, Professor Au discusses the importance of linking assessment to grade-level benchmarks and instruction.

- How can you build assessment into your instruction?
- How can you document ongoing classroom assessment?
- What is the difference between standards and benchmarks, and how do they impact your teaching?
- How do end-of-the-year benchmarks influence daily assessment?
- How can you make anecdotal records useful and manageable?



Video Segment 2: What Role Can Students Play in Their Assessment? (approximate times: 10:00-17:00): If you are watching the video in segments, you will find this image approximately 10 minutes into the video.

In this segment, Professor Au discusses using grade-level benchmarks to guide students' collection of evidence.

- Discuss your experience using rubrics. What changes might you make after watching the video?
- How can students use rubrics to guide learning?
- Describe how portfolios are developed and how they can be used as an assessment tool.



Video Segment 3: How Can Teachers Prepare for High-Stakes Tests? (approximate times: 17:00-24:00): If you are watching the video in segments, you will find this image approximately 17 minutes into the video.

In this segment, Professor Au suggests ways of preparing high-stakes tests, while warning of their limitations.

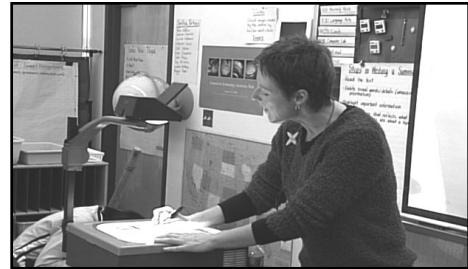
- Why are high-stakes tests not always accurate measures of student learning?
- What are the best ways to prepare students for high-stakes assessments?



Analyze the Video, cont'd.

Video Segment 4: How Does Assessment Focus Instruction? (approximate times: 24:00-end): If you are watching the video in segments, you will find this image approximately 24 minutes into the video.

In the final video segment, Professor Au focuses on how teachers use assessment to inform instruction.



- How does assessment help differentiate instruction?
- How can you use assessment results to create small, flexible groupings in your classroom?
- Based on what you learned in the video, what changes might you make in your assessment practices?

Extend Your Knowledge

Examine the Topic

High-stakes testing to measure proficiency in reading and writing has become a reality for students, beginning in grade 3. While this testing continues to be controversial, literacy experts and classroom teachers acknowledge the importance of preparing students to do well on these tests. Read the following statements by Professor Au and by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell. Think about how these statements reflect your literacy instruction and the ways in which you prepare your students to demonstrate their learning on your state tests.

We want to make sure that students know how to perform well on a test; how to display their knowledge when it comes to that big, important state test. So, the question is, how can we prepare students, but do it in a way that gives them something of lasting value? The most important contributor to high scores on a test is the rich content knowledge students already have. All the knowledge they have about literature, reading comprehension, reading in the content areas is going to help them do well on a reading test. Having a rich curriculum is the best way to prepare students to do well on a test.

Kathryn Au

You can involve students in specific activities that promote ongoing learning and help them perform better on tests. It is important to note that they are not merely exercises; rather, they are effective only to the extent that students encounter them repeatedly during their reading of a variety of texts. The goal is to help students understand the overall meaning of what is read and demonstrate that understanding.

1. Involve children in reading and discussing a variety of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction.
2. Use a variety of graphic organizers to help students understand the structure of the text.
3. Teach students to identify the genre and text structure in reading selections and to select a format for a written response (e.g., retell, summarize, compare/contrast).
4. Engage students in thinking about the text and talking about it in read-aloud, literature study, guided reading, and independent reading.

Extend Your Knowledge, cont'd.

5. Attend to students' reading level. When students are beyond their appropriate level, they are not able to develop effective strategies.
6. Provide numerous opportunities for rereading texts for different purposes.
7. Include numerous opportunities for pairs or triads to discuss and evaluate oral and written responses.
8. Consistently require students to provide evidence from the text to support their thinking.
9. Use the language (vocabulary and phrases) that is frequently used in tests as part of instructions for oral and written response to reading.
10. Teach students to distinguish between information stated directly in the text and information that is inferred.
11. Provide students with highlighters and teach them how to use them as part of classroom instruction.
12. Teach students how to highlight key words and phrases in questions, directions, and reading selections.
13. Teach students to organize their thoughts in writing quickly (using phrases, lists, web diagrams) before writing their responses.
14. Provide numerous opportunities for timed short writing and long written response to reading. Have students talk about and evaluate their responses.
15. Teach students that when reading selections are preceded by a boxed headnote, the information in that headnote is essential. Show them how to read headnotes, and look at the examples carefully.

Adapted from Fountas, I. C., and G. S. Pinnell. *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3-6)*, 471-473. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.



Notebook

Now write your answers to the following questions:

- What are the skills required for successful performance on your state tests?
- What specific vocabulary do students need to know and use when taking these tests?
- How do you prepare your students to do well on these tests throughout the year and just before the testing?
- How do you integrate this preparation in your daily instruction?
- What challenges do you and your students face in this preparation?



Interactive Activity

Assessing Comprehension

Go to the *Teaching Reading 3-5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/teachreading35

Asking students to retell a story they have recently read is one way to assess how well they comprehend a given text. In this activity, you will read the fable *The Bad Kangaroo*, listen as two students retell the story in their own words, and assess their comprehension using a retelling guide.

Extend Your Knowledge, cont'd.

Tips for New Teachers



Gauging Students' Understanding

The best way to gather information about your students' growth in reading and writing is to engage in conversations with students about what they know and can do and how well they understand a given task or text. Asking students to assess themselves as readers and writers also helps them identify goals in reading and writing. Here are a few talking points to guide you in these conversations.

Reading

- What makes reading easy? What kinds of books are easiest to read?
- When do you find reading most difficult? What kinds of books are difficult to read?
- What was easy about your reading today? What was difficult?
- What problems did you encounter? (Probe for vocabulary, word identification, and comprehension.)
- What did you do to try to solve the problem? Did it work? What else could you have tried? (Refer to anchor charts, partner work, etc.)
- As a reader, what have you learned most recently? How did you learn that? What would you like to learn next? How will you go about that?
- What do you want to do better?

Writing

- When do you find writing easy? When do you find writing most difficult?
- What was easy about your writing today? What was difficult?
- What problems did you encounter? (Probe for ideas, organization, word choice, and mechanics.)
- What did you do to try to solve the problem? Did it work? What else could you have tried? (Refer to anchor charts, partner work, etc.)
- As a writer, what have you learned most recently? How did you learn that? What would you like to learn next? How will you go about that?
- What do you want to do better?

Based on the following articles: Johnston, P. "Assessment Conversations." *The Reading Teacher* 57, no. 1 (2003): 90-92. and Johnston, P. "Literacy Assessment and the Future." *The Reading Teacher* 58, no. 7 (2005): 684-686.

Put It Into Practice

Choose Activities

In this section, you will build on what you have learned and develop strategies you can use in your own classroom. The following activities are designed to help you develop assessments and documentation. Choose one or both of the activities from the list below.

Activity 1: Develop a Rubric

In this activity, you will develop a rubric for one of the grade-level benchmarks in your literacy program.

Activity 2: Anecdotal Records Assessment

In this activity, you will begin to develop a technique for collecting evidence to demonstrate achievement of grade-level benchmarks.



Assignment

1. Develop a Rubric

Rubrics provide teachers and students with a framework for scoring and interpreting student performance. They contain criteria related to a curriculum benchmark and reflect at least three levels of performance: 1) is working on or approaching grade-level expectations; 2) meets grade-level expectations and 3) exceeds grade-level expectations.

1. Select a grade-level goal or benchmark for reading or writing (e.g., students will write with a clear focus and organization of ideas).
2. Assign a task that reflects this benchmark.
3. List characteristics of student performance at each of the three levels noted above.
4. Develop a grid that categorizes the criteria you have noted for each level of performance. You may want to assign a number to each level.
5. Use the rubric to assess samples of student performance on the benchmark.
6. Use the results of the rubric to plan instruction.

See the Sample Rubric at the end of this chapter to assist you in developing your own.

Benchmark: Students will be able to identify and understand how and why a character changes in a piece of fiction, based on what the character does or says and on what others say about the character.

Assignment: After completing a book, students will write at least three paragraphs describing how a character changed from the beginning to the end of the story.

After completing your own rubric, answer these questions:

- How did the rubric help you to assess student performance?
- Was the rubric an accurate reflection of the selected benchmark?
- What changes would you make to your rubric for future assessments?
- How will you share the rubric with your students? How could you include students in the development of other rubrics?
- What instruction will you plan as a result of using this rubric?

Put It Into Practice, cont'd.



Assignment

2. Anecdotal Records Assessment

In order for assessment to inform instruction, anecdotal records need to focus on content standards. In this activity, you will begin to develop a technique for collecting evidence to demonstrate achievement of grade-level benchmarks. When you have finished, save your written work to submit as an assignment.

1. Reread "Focused Anecdotal Records Assessment" by Paul Boyd-Batstone, focusing on the following five components:
 - a. Observing students in instructional settings
 - b. Maintaining a standards-based focus
 - c. Making anecdotal records
 - d. Managing anecdotal records
 - e. Analyzing anecdotal records
2. Identify one reading comprehension benchmark: What do you expect your students to be able to do at the end of the year? (e.g., Students will identify the most important information in a nonfiction text.)
3. Choose a struggling reader.
4. Observe this student three times over the course of several days or weeks, focusing on the reading comprehension benchmark you have chosen.
5. Write a specific anecdotal record for each observation.
 - a. Write observable data.
 - b. Write records in the past tense.
 - c. Support records with examples as evidence.
 - d. Don't tell what the student cannot do.
6. Analyze the anecdotal records, marking them for strengths (S) and needs (N). You may expand your analysis to include teaching points, misunderstandings, etc.
7. Write a paragraph reflecting on what you learned from the three anecdotal records and how they will inform your instruction of this student.

Reflect on Your Learning



Assignment

What Did You Learn?

Consider what you have learned about assessment practices from Professor Au's comments, the classroom examples, and the activities in this session. Write a summary of what you have learned. Use the questions below to guide your thinking. When you have finished, save your written work to submit as an assignment. If you are taking this workshop for credit, include it in your Literacy Practices Portfolio.

- Which classroom assessment practices most closely reflect what you do or would like to do?
- What are the challenges you face in implementing effective classroom assessment?
- What changes will you make to address those challenges?
- How can you prepare your students for high-stakes testing within your curriculum and instruction goals?
- How will you use the ideas from this workshop to improve your assessment of students' literacy learning?



Assignment

Create a Literacy Practices Portfolio

In this activity, you will continue to build your portfolio of instructional practices. Your portfolio for this workshop will include the following items:

- current practices in place in your classroom
- changes you would like to make
- a description of one change you have implemented
- evidence of student learning

1. Current practices

Include your chart from What Do You Do? Then, describe how you assess reading and writing throughout the day. Consider the following questions:

- How often do you assess your students' reading and writing?
- How do you provide feedback to your students on their reading and writing?
- How do you determine your students' vocabulary strengths and needs?
- How do you assess comprehension and response to reading?
- Describe the routines in place to assure ongoing assessment of reading and writing (e.g., How do you decide which students to assess?).
- How do you document your students' growth in reading and writing throughout the year?
- How do you share the results of your assessments with students and parents?
- How do you use the results to plan instruction?

Reflect on Your Learning, cont'd.

2. Changes you would like to make

Include your written response from What Did You Learn?

3. One change you have implemented

a. Make a change

Choose one instructional change that you described in What Did You Learn? to implement now. What is your thinking behind making this change? Describe in detail how you will implement it (e.g., creating a rubric for a writing assignment, creating a documentation routine, etc.). What are the expected outcomes for student learning with this change? Then try to implement this change.

b. Reflect on the change

Write a brief reflection about how this change enabled you to better assess your students' learning. What changes will you make next time to make this assessment or assessment procedure more effective? (If you are taking this workshop during the summer, describe the learning goals and expected outcomes of this change.)

4. Evidence of student learning

Include evidence demonstrating student learning as a result of the change. Select one student whom you have assessed in reading or writing. Include two to three performance samples and a record of your assessment. Write a paragraph describing the student's performance and the instruction you will use to improve it. Listed below are possible pieces of evidence:

- a rubric with sample attached
- anecdotal records
- retelling with tape recording or retelling form
- results of informal reading assessment
- Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)
- Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI)
- piece of writing with student self-assessment

Assignments

If you are taking this workshop for graduate credit, submit the following assignments for Workshop 8: Assessment and Accountability:

1. Examine the Literature

Read three articles on assessment strategies and complete the Examine the Literature Response Chart.

2. Develop a Rubric

Develop a rubric for one of the grade-level benchmarks in your literacy program.

3. Anecdotal Records Assessment

Begin to develop a technique for collecting evidence to demonstrate achievement of grade-level benchmarks.

4. What Did You Learn?

Write a summary of the ideas and strategies you explored in this session.

5. Create a Literacy Practices Portfolio

If you are taking this workshop for credit, you will continue constructing your portfolio of instructional practices.

Related Resources

Print Resources

Caldwell, J., and L. Leslie. *Intervention Strategies to Follow Informal Reading Inventory Assessment: So What Do I Do Now?* Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2004.

Fountas, I. C., and G. S. Pinnell. "Understanding the 'Testing Genre': Preparing Students for High-Quality Performance." *In Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3-6)*, 461-482. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

International Reading Association. "High-Stakes Assessments in Reading: A Position Statement of the International Reading Association." Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1999.

Johnston, P. "Literacy Assessment and the Future." *The Reading Teacher* 58, no. 7 (2004): 684-686.

Lipson, M., and K. Wixson. *Assessment and Instruction of Reading Disability*. New York: Harper Collins, 1991.

Valencia, S. W., and M. R. Buly. "Behind Test Scores: What Struggling Readers Really Need." *The Reading Teacher* 57, no. 6 (2004): 520-531.

Web Resources

Creating Rubrics

<http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.shtml>

This site is a tool for teachers to create rubrics. Rubrics are available online and teachers are able to customize them.

Running Records

www.readinga-z.com/newfiles/levels/runrecord/runrec.html

This site provides instruction on taking, scoring, and interpreting a running record.

Teaching Reading 3-5

Assessment and Accountability > Before You Watch

Assessment Chart

Literacy Skills/Strategy	Assessments	Challenges
Word Recognition		
Vocabulary		
Comprehension		
Writing Process		
Writing Content		
Writing Mechanics (spelling, capitalization, punctuation)		

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Teaching Reading 3-5

Assessment and Accountability > Before You Watch

Examine the Literature Response Chart

Title	Big Ideas	Notes and Questions
1.		
2.		
3.		

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Teaching Reading 3-5

Assessment and Accountability > Put It Into Practice

Sample Rubric

Category	3	2	1
The introduction identifies character traits at beginning and end of story.	Clearly and completely identifies character traits and how character develops during the story.	Identifies one or two general traits of the character during the story.	Describes the character but does not identify specific character traits or change.
The body of the piece provides details from story to support observations about character.	Cites specific evidence from text to support character trait observations. Refers to what character said, did, or what others said about character.	Refers to evidence in text but does not cite specific instances of what character said, did, or what others said about character.	Provides some details from story but examples are not clearly connected to specific examples.
The conclusion provides a summary of character development.	Writes a clear concluding paragraph highlighting character development throughout the story. Makes connections with other texts.	Writes a concluding paragraph restating information in Introduction.	Writes one or two sentences to conclude.

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