



# Assessment in Perspective: Focusing on the Readers Behind the Numbers

*Clare Landrigan, Tammy Mulligan*

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Assessment is an integral part of instruction. For the past decade, the focus on assessment particularly via high-stakes mandated tests has shifted away from the classroom and left teachers feeling like they are drowning in data. Assessment is, and needs to be again, much more than a number.

*Assessment in Perspective* is about moving beyond the numbers and using assessment to find the stories they tell. This book helps teachers sort through the myriad of available assessments and use each to understand different facets of their readers. It discusses how to use a range of assessment types from reading conference notes and student work to running records and state tests together to uncover the strengths and weaknesses of a reader. The authors share a framework for thinking about the purpose, method, and types of different assessments. They also address the questions they ask when choosing or analyzing assessments:

What type of tool do we need: diagnostic, formative, or summative; formal or informal; quantitative or qualitative?

How do we use multiple assessments together to provide an in-depth picture of a reader?

When and how are we giving the assessment?

Do we want to be able to compare our readers to a standard score, or do we need to diagnose a reader's needs?

Which area of reading does this tool assess?

How can we use the information from assessments to inform our instruction?

What information does a particular assessment tell us, and what doesn't it tell us?

What additional information do we need about a reader to understand his or her learning needs?

The book emphasizes the importance of triangulating data by using varied sources, both formal and informal, and across multiple intervals. It explains the power of looking at different types of assessments side-by-side with displays to find patterns or inconsistencies. What's more, students are included as valuable sources of data. Letting students in on the process of assessment is key to helping them set goals, monitor their own progress, and celebrate growth. When assessment is viewed in this way, instruction can meet high standards and still be developmentally appropriate.

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