

Going Public with Assessment

A COMMUNITY PRACTICE APPROACH



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ROSARIO ORDOÑEZ-JASIS

Principles
in Practice

LITERACY ASSESSMENT

Dear Reader,

As a former high school teacher, I remember the frustration I felt when the gap between Research (and that is, by the way, how I always thought of it: Research with a capital *R*) and my own practice seemed too wide to ever cross. Research studies—those sterile reports written by professional and university researchers—often seemed so out of touch with the issues that most concerned me when I walked into my classroom every day. These studies were easy to ignore, in part because they were so distant from my experiences and in part because I had no one to help me see how that research could impact my everyday practice.

Although research has come a long way since then, as more and more teachers take up classroom-based inquiry, this gap between research and practice unfortunately still exists. Quite frankly, it's hard for even the most committed classroom teachers to pick up a research article or book, figure out how that research might apply to their classroom, convince their administrators that a new way of teaching is called for, and put it into practice. While most good teachers instinctively know that there is something to be gained from reading research, who realistically has the time or energy for it?

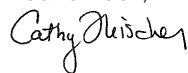
That gap informs the thinking behind this book imprint. Called Principles in Practice, the imprint publishes books that look carefully at the research-based principles and policies developed by NCTE and put those policies to the test in actual classrooms. The imprint naturally arises from one of the strong missions of NCTE: to develop policy for English language arts teachers. Over the years, many NCTE members have joined committees and commissions to study particular issues of concern to literacy educators. Their work has resulted in a variety of reports, research briefs, and policy statements designed both to inform teachers and to be used in lobbying efforts to create policy changes at the local, state, and national levels (reports that are available on NCTE's website, www.ncte.org).

Through this imprint, we are creating collections of books specifically designed to translate those research briefs and policy statements into classroom-based practice. The goal behind these books is to familiarize teachers with the issues behind certain concerns, lay out NCTE's policies on those issues, provide resources from research studies to support those policies, and—most of all—make those policies come alive for teacher-readers.

This book is part of the third series in the imprint, a series that focuses on literacy assessment. Each book in this series highlights a different aspect of this important topic and is organized in a similar way: immersing you first in the research principles surrounding the topic (as laid out in the *IRA–NCTE Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing*, Revised Edition) and then taking you into actual classrooms, teacher discussions, and student work to see how the principles play out. Each book closes with a teacher-friendly annotated bibliography.

Good teaching *is* connected to strong research. We hope that these books help you continue the good teaching that you're doing, think hard about ways to adapt and adjust your practice, and grow even stronger in the vital work you do with kids every day.

Best of luck,



Cathy Fleischer

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Introduction

Nora* is a phenomenal sixth-grade literacy teacher. Her students are actively engaged in lively discussions about books. They read extensively from self-selected texts, and they come together as a community around shared texts that help them explore big ideas that matter to them. Her students write a wide variety of compelling texts to move, persuade, reflect, and delight. They share writing with one another and publish freely on blogs, teen fiction sites, and the school website.

As the two of us (Kathryn and Rosie) worked on this book, Kathryn called Nora to talk with her about her approach to assessment. The conversation went something like this:

Kathryn: How do you use your kids' lit journals for assessment?

Nora: I don't. I don't. The journals are for them.

Kathryn: I don't mean how do you grade them. I mean, how do they help you assess their thinking?

Nora: I don't know. I mean, they share excerpts with the rest of us and that helps us go deeper in our thinking.

Kathryn: And when you listen in on that sharing, how does that help you assess them individually, or as a class?

Nora: Well, I guess I listen to see how deep they're getting with their thinking and if they're using the book to help them consider new ideas. But I don't really assess their lit journals.

Kathryn: See, I think you're assessing them all the time. You always seem to know who has something incredible that you want me to see, and who seems to be coasting, and who has an idea in their lit journal that hasn't been shared.

Nora: I guess I never thought about that as assessment.

*All student names are pseudonyms. Some teacher and school names are identified and others are pseudonyms, based on individual preferences.

That same week Kathryn was talking to Jennifer, a kindergarten teacher, about the photographs she takes of her students in action. When Jennifer sees some students getting excited about something in the classroom—a structure they’ve built, or a new development in the aquarium, or a Big Book she’s just read to them—she grabs her camera and snaps a picture. She shares these photos with the students and their families. When Kathryn asked Jennifer how she uses the photos for assessment, she explained that she didn’t. Yet, moments earlier, she was animated in her explanation of what she learned about her students through the photos. She noticed, for example, that Shelley was excited about the book they’d read together as a class the day before. Shelley was discussing it with two other students, pointing at pictures and talking about the characters in the book. Jennifer wondered if this young learner was ready for more specific reading experiences. She invited Shelley to look at and talk about the photo of her and her friends as they talked about the book. Jennifer used this conversation to invite Shelley to pick out another book that the two of them might explore together. Jennifer explained, “I used Shelley’s enthusiasm to initiate a conversation about reading. I thought she was ready to share a book with me and start reading.”

Jennifer and Nora are both avid “kidwatchers” (Owocki & Goodman, 2002). They observe their students closely, getting to know them as individuals and as learners. They use these observations to figure out when to offer new learning invitations and to determine what might help their students tackle more complex literacy experiences. They don’t see their work as *assessment*; they see it as *observation* or *teaching* (see Mills & O’Keefe, 2011, for a detailed discussion of how teachers expand their kidwatching into assessment and teaching decisions).

Jason is enrolled in a graduate course on literacy assessment. Early in the course, he balks at the idea of teacher observations and informal conversations with students as being a valuable source of assessment data. To Jason, assessment data must be reliable and objective; assessment data come in the form of charts and tables of scores, percentiles, and stanines. For Jason, the best and most useful data come from assessment tools designed and scored by others. In September, Jason meets with his school colleagues to review reading assessment data from benchmark testing in order to identify students for various levels of literacy support. Kareem’s scores place him in the lowest group. Jason advocates for moving Kareem to a higher group, saying, “I don’t think that’s the best placement for Kareem. In class he’s reading more sophisticated text than that, . . . and he’s reading, he’s understanding what he’s reading.” Jason’s teammate challenges him, but Jason continues to advocate for placing Kareem in a higher group. In his arguments, Jason includes observations of Kareem’s in-class work and his performance on informal classroom assessments. Like Jennifer and Nora, Jason uses classroom observations and samples of Kareem’s work to make value judgments about his work and the best

ways to support Kareem in moving ahead. He doesn't label this important work as *assessment*, yet it's part of how he approaches his work each day.

We believe these teachers *are* engaged in meaningful assessment that contributes to their students' learning. We further believe that teachers should recognize and value their own assessment expertise and share that expertise with others. We want families, community members, and those affecting education policy to recognize and value teacher assessment expertise. We want to reframe assessment as something teachers *do*, not as a tool that someone purchases to collect data on students. We want to distinguish between assessment as an inquiry experience—a process of getting to know students, their families, and communities in the context of literacy and learning—and assessment as a product. We want to situate discussions about assessment in the heart of where teaching and learning occur—in classrooms at the hands of knowledgeable teachers.

We believe teacher voices and their classroom experiences should be at the heart of assessment discussions and decisions. But we also believe that these discussions are more meaningful and powerful when many diverse voices are included. In this book, we argue that teachers can help make changes in the ways all of us talk about assessment. Teachers are in the best position to effect change in how assessment is framed when they engage in collaborative conversations with other teachers, with administrators, with parents and families, and with community members. We believe that when teachers reframe assessment as a collaborative inquiry into what and how students are learning, they can make a difference in how the public views the purpose of assessment and the most effective assessment practices. We further believe that when teachers collaborate with others, all participants come to better understandings about what assessment is, what assessment can do, and how assessment practices reflect our beliefs about reading and writing.

These beliefs are not ours alone. In 1994 the International Reading Association (now the International Literacy Association) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) developed the *Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing* (SARW), standards that were updated in 2009 (IRA–NCTE Joint Task Force on Assessment, 2009). The SARW call for assessment to be structured as a process of inquiry, and place teachers in the center of these assessment conversations.

And, even more pertinent to the argument of this book, the standards call for teachers to collaborate with others in the assessment process: other teachers, fami-

“Quality assessment is a process of inquiry.

It requires gathering information and setting conditions so that the classroom, school, and community become centers of inquiry where students, teachers, and other stakeholders can examine their learning—individually and collaboratively—and find ways to improve their practice.”

SARW

lies, and community members. The SARW explain that *all* stakeholders need to be part of making decisions about assessment and using assessment to promote our shared understanding of literacy and learning. In particular, as Standard 9 explains, when schools and communities work together around assessment, the community becomes a resource in the development of culturally responsive assessment practices. Families and community members help schools and individual teachers to recognize cultural biases in our assessment practices. In addition, community members can contribute to the design of more innovative assessment practices, as well as become allies in advocating for changes in state and federal mandates regarding assessment.

Throughout this book, we focus on two key perspectives that are supported by the standards document:

1. *Teachers are at the heart of assessment because they are integrally involved in what students are doing each day.* Their day-to-day experiences with students provide teachers with a unique perspective on teaching and learning. This perspective is essential in all conversations about assessing student learning.
2. *Teachers grow stronger, and smarter, in their assessment work when they collaborate with others.* Whether working with other teachers, or with family and community members, teachers develop their own understandings and contribute to essential assessment conversations that change the ways we all view and practice assessment.

Collaboration is indeed key to this work—and certain principles underlie how we see collaborative assessment in practice:

Collaborative Assessment Principles

1. ***Assessment as inquiry involves a constant cycle of reflecting on the relationship between beliefs, actions, and data.*** Our beliefs lead us to value certain classroom experiences and to seek particular types of data as evidence of student learning. The classroom decisions or teaching moves we make influence the data we generate and reflect our beliefs about teaching and learning, literacy, and assessment. Analyzing the data we generate leads to reflection on the teaching moves that allowed these data to be visible and provides a lens for critiquing our beliefs. When analysis of the data seems to contradict our beliefs, we reflect on both in an effort to reconcile the differences. This cycle leads to professional growth: improved classroom practice that is engaging and relevant to our students, more sophisticated and authentic classroom assessments, and greater clarity in what we value. (We explain the cycle in greater detail at the end of this introduction.)
2. ***Teachers collaborate with one another to strengthen their reflections and improve their practice.*** Through collaboration with others, we have an opportunity to examine our own beliefs and practices in relation to others' ideas. We develop ways of talking about student learning that make

this learning visible to others—including students and their families. In the process, we begin to examine the ways our beliefs about particular groups of students affect the ways we view assessment for these students. Working together allows us to clarify what we want our students to know and be able to do, and what evidence we will accept that students are truly engaged with this content and process knowledge. Together, we create a shared vision for our work while also identifying and working on the “problems of practice” (Wenger, 1999) *we* have identified as most useful at a given moment in time. Through shared inquiry, with a focus on developing individual *and* collective expertise, we develop confidence in our own assessment decisions (Boudett, City, & Murnane, 2005).

3. ***Collaborative assessment inquiry requires consideration of multiple perspectives.*** To outgrow our current systems of assessment, we must begin to ask new questions, de-privatize our practice, and invite new voices into the conversation. Established ways of seeing our work through new lenses include reading professional literature, attending conferences, engaging in teacher research projects, taking advanced courses at a university, and working with long-term consultants. Working with others in professional learning communities to present and reflect on what and how we assess provides additional opportunities to reexamine our work and to develop common understandings. Our challenge is to reach out to new voices in order to expand the pool of possibilities. Inviting students, families, and community members to engage in exploratory conversations helps us see our work through new lenses.
4. ***Expanding the voices engaged in assessment conversations supports critical inquiry into curriculum and assessment.*** When we have opportunities to engage in meaningful conversation with families and community groups, we are better able to critique the ways current curriculum and assessment practices do or do not reflect the cultural values and educational goals held by diverse communities. Teachers, working together with others, can identify the ways current assessment practices serve to maintain “gaps” in achievement and opportunity. Major publishers and large corporations in education promote a particular uni-dimensional view of what students should learn in school and how to assess student learning. This view attempts to standardize the ways all students learn and holds them all to the same learning progression. Local, state, and federal elected officials have their views—and of late have been heavily influenced by publishers and corporations now working in education. The voices of traditionally marginalized groups, often groups that reflect values and practices different from those making educational decisions, are generally absent from these discussions. Their voices are essential if we are to resolve the complex issues surrounding educational opportunity and achievement.
5. ***Families and community members deserve to be actively engaged in assessment conversations and to have the power to help advocate for change.*** Teachers working alone have not been successful in balancing the assessment narratives and dominant ideologies presented by publishers, corporations,

and state/federal legislators. Just *responding* to these narratives is not enough. Teachers, working together with families and local communities within a framework of reciprocity and trust, can be poised to present alternatives to the current use of high-stakes tests to make judgments about student learning, teacher performance, and school success. We can help to reframe assessment discussions to focus more clearly on understanding and supporting student literacy learning in a broad range of contexts.

6. *A key component in crafting alternative tools and strategies for assessment involves developing a shared vision about new literacies—what it is we want and need students to know and be able to do with language in order to shape a more democratic way of living.* Current standards that define essential content for literacy and most commercially published curriculum materials and assessments in the field of literacy promote a narrow view of literacy. This view is often grounded in a “classic” and “static” definition of literacy. Adults in our society use language in many different ways and have developed a wide range of literacies for doing their work and living their lives. Young people, particularly our teen learners, are finding ways to redefine literacy in their out-of-school lives (Jocson, 2008). These multimodal multiliteracies allow youth to make and share meanings in new ways. These broader definitions must be included in our discussions about how to assess the literacy skills of students in schools. Educated citizens in a democratic society use their literacy skills to share ideas with others, to critique the sociopolitical messages embedded in public discourse, and to build support for social change. We need assessment practices that allow us to study the ways students are growing in these literacy-rich experiences.

New possibilities for literacy assessment begin with shared inquiry. We need diverse voices coming together to explore the complexities of the ways students engage in literacies in and out of school and the ways of understanding and communicating how students are becoming more sophisticated, more effective users of language and other systems for making and sharing meaning. This shared inquiry is built on collaboration with others: other teachers, students, their families, and members of the broader school community. Through these collaborative conversations, we can consider new perspectives, tease out the long-held assumptions that hold us back, and create new possibilities. Embedded in these new possibilities is an expanded notion of literacy—from a single, static “literacy” that can be reduced to preset learning outcomes to more fluid, evolving “literacies” that challenge us to constantly critique and refine the ways we teach and assess students’ use of multimodal literacies.

How Is This Book Organized?

We believe that collaborative inquiry with various groups constitutes a kind of community practice approach—a means of going public. Throughout the chapters

that follow, you'll find stories of teachers engaging in collaborative inquiries with others and reflections on possibilities for new inquiries. We've organized the book in a way that reflects our belief that collaborative conversations surrounding assessment need to take place at many levels, specifically teachers collaborating with one another and teachers collaborating with families and community members. In Part I, we focus on collaborations among teachers; in Part II, we shift our focus to collaborations between teachers and families and communities. In both parts, we begin with an introduction that frames the focus, share stories and insights surrounding that focus, and conclude with specific invitations: i.e., actions small and large that teachers might undertake in an effort to explore, better understand, or initiate with others some of the work of going public with our assessment conversations.

Part I: Teachers Collaborating with One Another

In Part I, we explore the ways teachers collaborate with one another around assessment, and why this process is crucial. Working together, teachers can see their own practices more clearly and deepen their understanding of literacy, teaching, and learning by considering the ideas of others. Articulating our beliefs and practices helps us gain confidence in our work while finding ways to explain our work to others. As anyone who has experienced the first meetings of a professional learning community (PLC) will attest, this collaborative work is not easy. The examples in Chapters 1 through 3 highlight some of the ways teachers can build a professional community around assessment and the strategies they use when a group seems to be off track. The Invitations at the end of Part I offer ideas to support readers who want to initiate and/or sustain collaborative assessment conversations with peers.

Part II: Teachers Collaborating with Families and Communities

In Part II, we explore the ways teachers collaborate with families and communities around assessment, and why this process is crucial. Education reformers have called for increased family involvement in schools for years, yet aside from pockets of innovative work, little has changed. Many home-school partnerships are based on one-way communication: teachers and administrators informing families about assessment practices and presenting analysis of test data. Family members are "taught" how the school or teacher assesses literacy and are then informed about the results of these assessments. While this does include families in the process, their role is passive and minimal. When families are invited to share their observations, dreams, and questions about their children's literacy learning, communication opens up so that both home and school are contributing, and both are in a position to learn from and inform the other. Part II explores how teachers can truly

"[S]chool communities bear particular responsibility for ensuring that all their members become fully involved in the assessment process. Many parents and caregivers, partly because of cultural disparities, linguistic barriers, or their own schooling histories, do not feel comfortable voicing their concerns. School communities have a responsibility to create conditions and assessment procedures that make people comfortable doing so."

SARW

collaborate with families around assessment, moving beyond just teaching families how to interpret the test scores to looking deeply at how our assessment practices reflect our beliefs and values. An essential part of going public with families and communities involves teacher voices helping all of us understand how to build bridges across differences in values about literacy, schooling, and adult–child relationships.

When teachers collaborate with families, all participants contribute to the creation of a shared vision about literacy, learning, and assessment. This is essential in all settings, but particularly when teachers are teaching in communities that reflect

literacies and cultural experiences different from their own. Teachers and families together define what's important about their children's literacy learning—and in the process, teachers learn from families about the experiences and values of their community. Together, teachers and families determine how they want to assess, celebrate, and expand children's literacy learning. Families and communities become resources for shaping, supporting, and sustaining students' literacy learning.

At the end of Part II, in Chapter 7, we explore one particularly powerful way of engaging in school–family collaborations using concepts related to community inquiry. Community inquiry, including community mapping, can be used to reimagine assessment by intentionally incorporating the literacy values and resources of families and communities. Language and literacy community mapping enriches the pool of information available to classroom teachers for assessing student learning and growth while also offering insight into the literacy values and practices held by the local community (Dunsmore, Ordoñez-Jasis, & Herrera, 2013). We have included a second set of Invitations at the end Part II. While the first set focuses on going public with assessment through collaborative conversations with colleagues, the Invitations in Part II invite readers to explore possibilities for engaging families and communities in shared inquiry around literacy assessment. Part II concludes with a look back at the Collaborative Assessment Principles woven throughout the book.

Additional Resources

At the close of the book, we have included an annotated bibliography of our favorite resources, organized by key topics in the book. The list is not meant to be exhaustive but rather to direct interested readers to sources that extend some of the

ideas highlighted in the book: using protocols to guide collaborative assessment conversations, teachers building collaborative relationships with families, working with emergent bilingual students and families, and community inquiry and mapping.

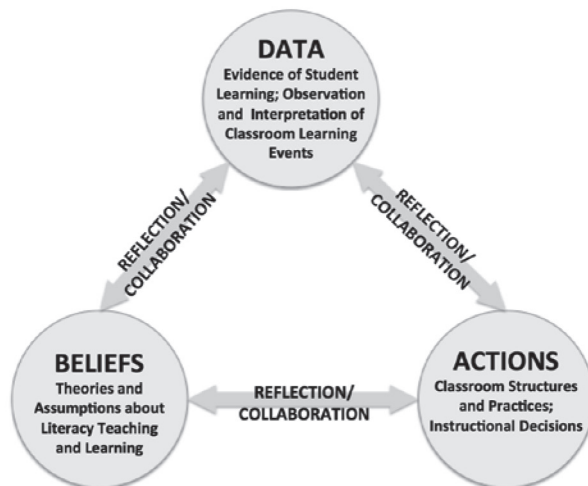
A Word about Students

Students and their learning are at the center of our work with assessment. They represent a key voice in collaborative classroom inquiry, they bring schools and families together, and their success is at the heart of community conversations about assessment. While we recognize the central role that students play, we have chosen to focus here on collaborative inquiry conversations among adults: teachers talking with teachers, teachers and families working together, and schools and communities shaping new possibilities for the future.

Visually Representing Our Work: A Model for Teacher Professional Development around Assessment

The model in Figure 0.1 represents the ways we see teachers' beliefs being connected both to the choices they make in their classrooms and to the data they collect and analyze as they make sense of and plan for student learning. Kathryn initially created a draft of this model to explain teacher professional growth (Pierce,

Figure 0.1. Transactional model of professional growth (adapted from Pierce, 1993, p. 299).



1993), specifically to show how teachers' beliefs, classroom structures, and assessments reflect and inform one another. She has fine-tuned the model through ongoing reflections on how teachers grow as part of the assessment process.

At its essence, the model demonstrates this: Teachers develop classroom structures and strategies based on their beliefs about literacy, learning, teaching, curriculum, assessment, and so on. In other words, their classrooms reflect these beliefs. For example, teachers who believe that students learn to read by reading provide extended time in their classrooms for their students to engage in independent and shared reading. Reflection and collaboration with others, then, help teachers maintain an alignment between their beliefs and practices. When teachers learn about a new classroom strategy from another teacher, they assimilate this into their ongoing practice—and may find that their beliefs shift slightly to explain why they feel this new practice is appropriate for their students. The reflection is essential. As Watson explains, “Serious educators may begin their journeys with an activity, but they move and grow by asking questions and by collecting evidence” (Watson, 1994, p. 604). Other times, teachers reject new practices that are suggested to them, because these practices do not reflect their beliefs about how children learn literacy and how teachers can best support them in the process.

The decisions teachers make in their classrooms—the ways they engage their students in literacy learning—highlight certain types of data about student learning while masking others. When teachers value and engage with students during independent reading time, for example, they are better able to gather and analyze data about students' book choices, stamina for reading, and use of various reading strategies. Teachers would find it difficult to gather data about student reading choices and preferences if they did not provide this time for students to select books for independent reading. Similarly, if teachers value writing as a process, they plan time during the school day for students to engage in and reflect on their use of writing processes. Teachers set aside time for extended blocks of writing and offer mini-lessons focused on the various ways writers envision and craft their work. These classroom choices foreground data regarding students' use of various revision strategies, the ways they collaborate with others, and the range of topics students select for their writing.

When teachers gather and reflect on the data generated in their classrooms, they can critique both their instructional choices and their beliefs. Connecting the data to instructional choices allows teachers to determine how well the classroom learning environment is supporting students in their work. At the same time, connecting the data to the teacher's beliefs and values encourages the teacher to maintain alignment between data and values. The teacher can ask, “Am I collecting and analyzing information about the aspects of literacy learning that I most value?” For example, if the teacher is collecting extensive data on student timed readings

or timed writings, the teacher can ask whether such data reflect what she knows about the reading and writing processes and about how best to support students in expanding their use of reading and writing to accomplish things they value. The teacher may feel that her assessment energies would be better spent focused on some other aspect of literacy learning—something that is more aligned with her beliefs.

We believe that teachers grow when they have time and support for reflecting on their beliefs and practices, and for reviewing literacy learning data that reflect what they value and that inform their classroom decisions. Further, we believe this process is enriched in powerful ways when teachers can engage in this reflection in the company of others—when they can go public with their beliefs and actions, with their analysis of learning data, and with their growing understanding of the role of literacy in students' lives in and out of school. We use the model in Figure 0.1 throughout Part I to show how teachers thrive when they engage in collaborative literacy assessment conversations with their peers, and in Part II to highlight the benefits of going public around assessment with families and community members.

We hope the ideas and examples in the chapters that follow will both support and inspire classroom teachers to go public with their work. We believe that classroom assessments and the use of diverse assessment data are more powerful when teacher voices are at the center of the work, when families, community members, and policymakers are listening closely to the world-of-practice perspective that only teachers can share. We hope you will join us in celebrating the teachers who have guided our own thinking about assessment, and that their courageous stories will inform and inspire you to compose and share your own literacy assessment experiences and insights.

Understanding Literacy Assessment

(adapted from the IRA–NCTE *Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing*, Revised Edition)

In the past thirty years, research has produced revolutionary changes in our understanding of language, learning, and the complex literacy demands of our rapidly changing society. It's no wonder, then, that determining the best ways to assess literacy is a complex undertaking. *Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing* helps teachers and administrators in this task by providing thoughtful guidelines to inform our decisions about how to best assess the teaching and learning of literacy. The standards rest on the belief that quality assessment hinges on the process of setting up conditions so that the classroom, the school, and the community become centers of inquiry where students, teachers, and other members of the school community investigate their own learning, both individually and collaboratively.

Centered in a strong research base, the standards posit:

1. The interests of the student are paramount in assessment.
 2. The teacher is the most important agent of assessment.
 3. The primary purpose of assessment is to improve teaching and learning.
 4. Assessment must reflect and allow for critical inquiry into curriculum and instruction.
 5. Assessment must recognize and reflect the intellectually and socially complex nature of reading and writing and the important roles of school, home, and society in literacy development.
 6. Assessment must be fair and equitable.
 7. The consequences of an assessment procedure are the first and most important consideration in establishing the validity of the assessment.
 8. The assessment process should involve multiple perspectives and sources of data.
 9. Assessment must be based in the local school learning community, including active and essential participation of family and community members.
 10. All stakeholders in the educational community—students, families, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and the public—must have an equal voice in the development, interpretation, and reporting of assessment information.
 11. Families must be involved as active, essential participants in the assessment process.
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Teachers want assessment tools and strategies that inform instruction, engage students in the process, and invite families and community members to enter into the conversation about student learning and progress. When teachers work collaboratively with one another, they align beliefs and practices to generate new ideas that reflect the questions they are asking about literacy and learning. When students, families, and the community are invited to be active, engaged participants in these discussions, all stakeholders have an opportunity to create a shared vision for literacy learning and to construct assessment tools and strategies that help everyone answer the important questions: “How as teachers are we engaging with one another over our literacy assessment beliefs and practices?” and “How can we better bring families and communities into these conversations?”

In this volume of the Principles in Practice Literacy Assessment strand of books, veteran educators Kathryn Mitchell Pierce and Rosario Ordoñez-Jasis share classroom vignettes, strategies, and resources for “going public” with literacy assessment through teacher collaboration with colleagues, with families, and with the community. Drawing from the IRA–NCTE *Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing*, Revised Edition, and their own extensive experience, the authors have compiled a set of collaborative assessment principles, as well as a model for teacher professional development around assessment, to guide teachers from assessment theory to practical implementation in the classroom.

Teachers are at the heart of assessment conversations because they have up-close and personal experiences with how assessments impact their students. These experiences provide an invaluable perspective that is essential to all decision making about assessing student learning. But teachers don’t—or shouldn’t—stand alone. Their critical expertise is strengthened by the experiences and expertise of others invested in the success of our students—colleagues, families, communities, and students themselves.

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