

**Title:** "Reading Assessment and Learning to Read"

**Full Citation:** Afflerbach, P. (1998). "Reading Assessment and Learning to Read." In F. Lehr & J. Osborn (Eds.), *Literacy for All: Issues in Teaching and Learning*. NY: Guilford Press.

**Subject(s):** Assessment

**Grade Level:** 1–2

**Synopsis:** Afflerbach describes a complex "array of skills and strategies, motivations, knowledge, and social awareness" (p. 243) that children bring to reading, and he argues that assessment of children learning to read must be broad enough to cover all the aspects of learning to read that we value. Many assessment measures are already available, and he describes these.

Concepts About Print (Clay, 1985) evaluates prereading skills such as print awareness, knowledge of story structure, and sound-symbol correspondences.

Checklists developed by Morrow (1989), Neumann and Roskos (1993), and Sulzby (1985) help teachers observe and record emergent reading behaviors with storybooks.

Teachers can also develop their own checklists as they observe children's concepts of print and prereading behaviors.

Many commercial reading assessments do a good job of measuring discrete skills in identifying letters and their sounds, distinguishing phonemes, blending, and decoding words, and word-recognition and vocabulary skills. More work needs to be done to develop valid measures of comprehension beyond the multiple-choice format.

Reading inventories can be used to assess phonics and decoding skills, sight-word vocabulary, and oral reading/fluency skill.

Motivation is important in learning to read, yet there are few measures of this aspect of reading. Two assessments of motivation developed for elementary-school students could be adapted for use with children learning to read: the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP), and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS).

Content-domain knowledge is an important element of successful reading, yet most assessments attempt to eliminate the influence of prior knowledge in order to remove bias from the tests. There needs to be some way to acknowledge and measure students' use of prior knowledge in reading. Teacher checklists, interviews, and K-W-L activities can help teachers observe students' prior knowledge.

Children's "social knowledge" of the types and uses of reading should be measured as well. The Measuring Reading Activity Inventory (MRAI) is one way to examine beginning readers' reading habits and experiences. Teacher observations, portfolios, and student self-reports also can be used to find out the range of types of reading children are doing.

Schools need to identify the various needs of their audiences and determine a group of core assessments that will be of use to these audiences. "What is needed from a comprehensive assessment program cannot be determined without consulting all

legitimate stakeholders.” (p. 250) They need to coordinate their assessment program, to be sure that all the assessment measures are useful and none are redundant. Some of the negative effects of high-stakes assessments are discussed.

Teachers need to take a central role in assessing learning to read, yet they often lack the training to do so. Stiggins & Conklin (1992) found that teachers’ assessments are often ineffectual. There is a need for “professional development opportunities for teachers to develop assessment expertise.” (p. 255)

- Quote(s):** “Good assessment results from systematic and inclusive development efforts that focus on the validity, reliability, and utility of assessment information.” (pp. 239–240)
- “Assessment must honor a broad view of young children learning to read.” . . . “A collection of assessments must capture the complexities of learning to read to provide the information that is critical to fostering young students’ growth in all aspects of early reading.” (p. 248)
- “Teachers are best situated to collect useful assessment information related to students’ learning to read.” (p. 255)
- “Teachers’ professional development should include work that helps build and conduct assessments of early reading that provide useful information.” (p. 256)
- “Central to independence and success in reading is the ability to self-assess, and self-assessment should have its beginnings in learning to read.” (p. 258)