Understanding, Assessing, and Teaching Reading

A DIAGNOSTIC APPROACH

EIGHTH EDITION

James A. Erekson | Michael F. Opitz | Roland Schendel

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A Diagnostic Approach

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Eighth Edition

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To Dorothy Rubin
For conceiving the original and allowing us to continue her legacy.

M.F.O., J.A.E., and R.K.S.

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About the Authors

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Preface

Understanding, Assessing, and Teaching Reading: A Diagnostic Approach, Eighth Edition, is based on the premise that a diagnostic approach to assessment and instruction involves asking and answering questions about each child's reading. Our goal is to provide key knowledge about the teaching of reading, to model how to ask and answer assessment questions based on this knowledge, and then to provide teaching strategies that fit best with common answers to assessment questions. To achieve this goal we have combined theory, knowledge, and skills with practical application.

The demand is greater than ever for teachers who understand why they do what they do in reading assessment. We emphasize the importance of teachers and explain the roles they play for young readers. Good teachers must understand factors that affect reading and also assessment techniques they can use to better understand how these factors affect individual readers. Good teachers ask questions about each student to help teachers select, administer, and interpret the most appropriate assessments. When information is gathered to answer questions about students, assessment is a powerful process. When teachers administer assessments based only on mandates and requirements, the validity of assessment is compromised. With the right information, teachers can make much better decisions about how to help readers. To this end, we present many reading skills, strategies, and teaching techniques that are appropriate follow-ups to appropriate assessments. We make no assumption that any one strategy or teaching technique will meet the needs of all students, so we encourage teachers to look for students' strengths first and then to find teaching strategies and techniques that build on these strengths.

We know the term *diagnostic assessment* can be intimidating. In Chapter 1 we set the stage by describing our beliefs about the diagnostic approach clearly and in student-centered ways. We hope this introduction will help teachers demystify and humanize reading diagnosis.

In Chapters 2 through 5 we present information on specific aspects of assessment each teacher must be able to apply with understanding. They have been written in a specific order to prioritize techniques that provide immediately useful information about each child as a reader. These chapters are oriented to three guiding questions that help teachers choose the most appropriate assessment techniques: *What do I want to know? Why do I want to know it? How can I best discover this information?*

In Chapters 6 through 13 we focus on assessment and teaching of specific aspects of reading and writing. Each of these chapters follows a standard format and is written to stand alone, to be read and used in any order. We have provided titles for many children's literature texts that could be used with young readers to give teachers a head start on carrying out as much assessment and instruction as they can with authentic texts.

In Chapter 14 we provide suggestions on partnering with parents, other teachers, and the broader community to help readers grow.

A full Informal Reading Inventory is provided in the Appendix to enable full implementation of the IRI as presented in Chapter 4 without requiring the purchase of supplemental books. We have streamlined the IRI process of scoring and interpretation to match our diagnostic approach.

New to This Edition

Understanding, Assessing, and Teaching Reading: A Diagnostic Approach is a teacher-friendly book designed to boost teachers' confidence in helping young readers. We have kept this goal in mind in making the following substantial revisions to the current edition:

- A dedicated chapter on writing. Writing is fundamental to literacy growth, and many students' strengths and needs in writing can be related to their growth as readers.
- Bridge exercises have been added between the subsections of the chapters to show readers how teachers would make decisions from understanding reading to assessing readers, and from assessing readers to teaching them, and how teaching leads to further understanding. These exercises can help instructors improve student interaction with text. The bridges are found in 2–3 locations in each chapter, to mark transition between subheadings: Understanding, Assessing, and Teaching.
- Each content chapter (Chapters 8–13) features video examples newly selected to demonstrate best practices described in the book. By linking to visual media, readers will be able to see and hear what is being taught in the book.
- Application Exercises have been added to each chapter, offering students opportunities to apply what they are learning to realistic classroom situations. The specific challenges of assessing and teaching English learners are featured strongly in each set of exercises. These exercises are found throughout each chapter near the "bridge" sections.
- Updated children's literature references are inserted throughout the book. More recent books will match better what teachers will find in public and school libraries. A special focus on updated children's literature is given in Chapter 7.
- The updated research base and references include review of 110 research articles and chapters published since the last edition, with dozens of references added or changed to refresh the book's identification with current research. The text connects readers to the most up-to-date information on diagnostic assessment, reading engagement, teaching with texts, factors that affect reading achievement, comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, reading fluency, and the role of teachers. These new references can be found in each chapter's endnotes.
- Printable sample assessment forms are included. Readers can see what assessment record keeping looks like, with both blank masters and copies filled in with teacher coding. These documents are linked within Chapters 8–13.

Support Materials for Instructors

The following resources are available for instructors to download on pearsonhighered.com/educator. Click the "Support for Educators" link, then click Download Supplements and enter the author or title of this book, select this particular edition of the book to log in, and download textbook supplements.

Test Bank (0135178576)

The Test Bank includes a robust collection of test items. Some items (lower-level questions) simply ask students to identify or explain concepts and principles they have learned. But many others (higher-level questions) ask students to apply those same concepts and principles to specific classroom situations—that is, to actual student behaviors and teaching strategies.

PowerPoint Slides

These lecture slides (0135465974) highlight key concepts and summarize key content from each chapter of the text.

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We appreciate the editing work of Mirasol Dante and Padma Rekha Madhukannan, who improved the book with their careful review of the manuscript and all the resources in the new edition. We would like to thank the reviewers of this edition: Cynthia Walters, University of Central Florida; Nance Wilson, SUNY Cortland; Patricia Ann Jenkins, Albany State University.

Chapter 1

Understanding a Diagnostic Approach to Assessing and Teaching Reading

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Chapter Outline

English Learners in a Diagnostic Approach to Assessing and Teaching Reading

Ages and Stages of Literacy Development to Consider in a Diagnostic Approach to Assessing and Teaching Reading

Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to . . .

1.1 Discuss the attributes of a diagnostic approach to assessing and teaching reading and the beliefs on which it is based.

1.2 Describe the basic ideas that form the foundation of Response to Intervention and how they connect to a diagnostic approach.

1.3 Explain how reading can be defined and how defining reading influences a diagnostic approach.

1.4 Compare and contrast proficient and less proficient reading behaviors.

1.5 Define English Learners and explain the levels of language proficiency through which they progress.

1.6 Construct a timeline that shows how readers change over time.

Scenario

Assessing and Teaching Reading: A Diagnostic Approach in Action

When you walk into Ms. Prazzo's third-grade classroom, you realize that something special is taking place; you can sense the excitement of learning. Often no one notices your arrival because they are so engrossed in what they are doing; they are both motivated and engaged.

Ms. Prazzo's classroom hums with learning noise. It's a room in which children and teacher alike are involved in a dynamic and interactive teaching and learning program driven by ongoing assessment. Ms. Prazzo is constantly asking her students questions, and answering theirs. These questions range from those about how readers feel and what they believe about reading to questions about how they think before, during, and after reading to questions about how they use structures such as words, letters, sounds, and grammar. She returns constantly to three powerful questions when choosing assessment tools: What do I want to know? Why do I want to know that? How can I best discover this information? She also asks a fourth question: How can I use what I discover? Because she answers these questions for each student she works with, she can design targeted, purposeful instruction and groupings to help her advance the growth of all readers.

Throughout the day, you can observe Ms. Prazzo "zooming in" to focus on individuals and then "zooming out" to apply what she knows to groups or the whole class. This requires flexible, dynamic grouping tailored to children's strengths and needs. Children flow from one group to another, depending on the purpose of the group. Groups are formed and dissolved based on specific goals and purposes, not as ongoing ability groups. It's not unusual at any given moment to see her class split into a variety of group types: small groups, pairs, and individuals.

Conferencing is at the heart of Ms. Prazzo's *zoom in, zoom out* approach. She meets with each of her students at least once every week to review progress and to establish new goals. She keeps copious notes from these conferences and uses them to inform her future instruction.

Ms. Prazzo is always probing, questioning, and keeping a sharp eye out for what her students do well and for that they are showing her they need to learn. But she also continually reflects to evaluate herself as a teacher, the materials she uses when teaching, and the classroom context. For example, she constantly adds to the classroom library as a result of what she learns from talking with students about reading interests. She fully understands that interest and attitudes significantly influence reading and wants to make sure that the classroom environment supports her students' interests and promotes a positive association with reading. To that end, she has learned from her students that many different types of text count as reading, and she has included them as a part of the classroom library and explicit reading instruction. These include magazines, brochures, newspapers, comics, and electronic texts. She also regularly shares with students what she is reading and explains why she reads.

Ms. Prazzo is passionate about assessing, learning, and teaching reading, and her passion plays out every day in her classroom. She continually strives to be the best possible teacher. A diagnostic approach is central to her ongoing growth as a teacher and her students' learning and development.

Defining a Diagnostic Approach

A diagnostic approach to assessing and teaching reading is a comprehensive way of using data that is gathered by examining three primary components of effective reading instruction: learner, instruction, and context. This examination is ongoing and multifaceted in that it requires teachers to use a variety of assessment techniques, including student self-assessment, teacher self-assessment, and assessment of instructional materials and contexts to provide the best possible instruction for all learners. It is based on the following beliefs:

1. *Problem-solving for any complicated system requires diagnostic tools.* Systems are made of components that in turn have their own moving parts. Components interact with each other in a system to make something larger happen. Monitoring the inner workings of a system helps people notice when something goes wrong, to keep it in good working order and figure out how to improve the system. Moreover, diagnostics can help people avoid tinkering with components that need no help.

   Reading is one such complex system. When people read, different sets of "moving parts" interact among the texts they read, the contexts in which they read, and themselves as readers. To help all learners achieve strong reading potential, educators use a diagnostic approach to examine all three areas and identify learner strengths and needs.

2. *Reading diagnosis is about knowing readers.* Although the word *diagnosis* is frowned on by many educators for one reason or another, we maintain that when the original Greek meaning, "to come to know," is emphasized, it is a useful term to discuss how to identify children's reading strengths and needs. We subscribe to the definition of *diagnosis* offered in *The Literacy Dictionary*:

   > The act, process, or result of identifying the nature of a disorder or disability through observation and examination. As the term is used in education, it often includes the planning of instruction and an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses (i.e., needs) of the student.[1]

When analyzing this definition, two points that relate to a diagnostic approach to assessing and teaching reading become evident:

- Using observation and other assessment techniques throughout the school day is necessary to figure out students' strengths and needs.
- Using what is discovered from the observations and assessment techniques is essential for planning appropriate instruction.

The necessity of looking for both strengths and needs cannot be overstated. Knowledge of what a child *can* do is always helpful in providing insight into their needs. Just as important is to recognize that many factors affect reading performance (the topic of Chapter 2).

Our rationale for using the word *diagnosis* leads us to use a computer coder as a positive metaphor for diagnostics. Consider the tasks of computer coders. They use diagnostic tools that will help them to identify strengths and potential in the code they write and any possible errors or bugs. Coders who apply diagnostic tools can improve and find new uses for good code as well as use the same tools to repair faults.

Therefore, it is the diagnostic approach to assessing and teaching reading that we promote in this text. Teachers first search for strengths and use those strengths to build up to what students need to learn. This search for strengths extends beyond the learner and includes instruction, texts, and contexts—all of which influence reading development.

Our view of diagnosis is supported by the 10 principles set forth by the position statement *Excellent Reading Teachers*, from the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association (IRA):

- Diagnosis underlies prevention.
- Early diagnosis is essential in order to ameliorate reading problems from the start.
- Diagnosis is continuous.
- Diagnosis and instruction are interwoven.
- Diagnosis is a *means* to improvement; it is not an end in itself.
- Teacher-made as well as published reading assessment instruments are used in diagnosis.
- Noneducational as well as educational factors are considered.
- Diagnosis identifies strengths as well as needs.
- Diagnosis is an individual process; that is, in diagnosis, the teacher focuses on an individual child. (Diagnostic information can be obtained from various contexts: working in a one-on-one relationship with a child, observing a child in a group, or observing a child doing seatwork.)
- The teacher works to establish rapport and treats each student as an individual worthy of respect.[2]

3. *Identifying readers' strengths is a good first step in accelerating readers' growth.* Children are always showing what they know and need to know. For example, a child who is reading every word correctly yet cannot discuss what has been read shows that the reader knows how to identify words. What needs attention is comprehension. Using the strength to teach to the need, a teacher might begin by using a previewing technique, such as identifying key words in a text that support discussion on what the book will be about. Strong word identification makes this comprehension strategy more viable.

As you can see, beginning with strengths is anything but pretending that students know everything and just need to be encouraged. Instead, teachers who look

for strengths first see the child as the one who can bring something to the new learning to begin from a position of strength. We are under no false assumptions about reader factors that might need to be addressed to help the reader achieve. But we also acknowledge that many readers have not had sufficient opportunities to develop strengths before they are labeled with a term such as *at risk, deficient*, or *below grade level*. Until each child has had *many engaged opportunities* to develop and apply her strengths to texts and contexts (over weeks and months of time), we should not be too hasty in assuming that all reading difficulties emanate from the reader. In fact, this is one of the premises behind intervention models such as those that are often used under the auspices of Response to Intervention: teachers should first assume the need is for a different instructional approach.

4. *Identifying needs is an important part of a diagnostic approach.* As stated above, learners are always showing what they know and need to know. Part of helping children to move forward is to carefully document their needs and to design appropriate instruction to address those needs. Our diagnostic approach to assessing and teaching reading suggests a clear priority of first looking for strengths in all three dimensions of reading. That is, a teacher will want information from the affective domain (i.e., interests, attitudes, and identity), cognitive domain (i.e., metacognition and comprehension), and perceptual domain (i.e., word knowledge and phonics).
5. *Zooming in and out is essential.* Another key aspect of our model is what we call "zooming in and zooming out." *Zooming in* means spending time getting to know just one learner very well and learning to teach based on this knowledge. *Zooming out* means figuring out how to scale the management of information and planning for groups and whole classes. As Ms. Prazzo illustrates in our opening scenario, when teachers *zoom in*, they get to know one student in depth. Doing so can help teachers to develop dispositions, knowledge, and skills necessary for working with young learners. When teachers *zoom out*, they learn to apply this same disposition, knowledge, and skill when teaching small groups or a whole class. They generalize their understandings to the wider audiences.

Scenario

Sarah Zooms In and Zooms Out

"I don't know how you handle all that chaos!" says Audra, observing free-choice reading in Sarah's second-grade class. Crates of books on a central table look like a feeding frenzy as students move back and forth, picking out and replacing books. Before the observation, Audra learned that all the books were selected based on an interest inventory. "How do you help them find the right level?" she asks.

"I look at text levels in a broad way," Sarah answers. "The research is pretty clear that books within the K–1 range are more or less the same. The same is true for the discrete levels in second grade. By third grade, the range of texts is broader. The librarian and I keep the crates in a range that matches grades K–3. But if books the kids ask for come from higher levels, we put them in the crate anyway. I want to help each kid find an emotional match—a kind of text, a topic, a genre, or whatever can hook them. I have learned that there is more than one way to match readers and texts and that this emotional (affective) matching is powerful. When the emotional match is good, the words and sentences seem much easier to read for some readers."

"Yeah, but it looks like most of the kids aren't really staying with any one text. What if they never get focused and get down to reading?"

"Oh, I'm totally with you there. I never would have been able to handle the constant shift of interests if I hadn't learned the importance of zooming in closely on one student for an entire trimester before thinking about "zooming out" to my whole class. Raul couldn't stay focused on one topic week to week in our tutoring sessions, but I finally learned that it was all part of the search. When he learned that I was really going to follow through on bringing him what he was interested in, he was *always* engaged in what I brought and 'tried it on for size.' Gradually, he became more willing to tell me what he wanted next. It took us a few weeks, but we soon had a pile of texts he was interested in browsing through, and before long, we found one he got totally hooked on—his touchstone text. He helped me learn that it's natural for kids to need a lot of time to get to know a lot of texts before they settle on those they can get addicted to. It took a crate of books just for him! So then I figured if it was really important, I should zoom out and scale it for the whole class. Let me show you how I organize it."

Audra and Sarah walk over to a file cabinet, and Sarah pulls out a student folder. Opening it, she comments, "Each student's interest—what they're looking for now and what they've liked in the past—is all in the sticky notes on the interest section of the reader profile. All the students know they're on the hunt for what will get them hooked. That's what we talk about in our individual conferences each week. When their interests change, I write about it on a sticky note and add it to the profile. For example, when I look over and see Mandy sifting through the pile, I know she's already got her crocodile books and she's looking for something else! I'm comfortable with the whole class looking like chaos because I know that it really is not; on the personal level, each student is pursuing a goal to find reading that will engage them."

"I don't know if I could do this all at once like you're doing," Audra says.

"I don't think you should," Sarah replies. "I would suggest zooming in on one student for six to eight weeks as a tryout. The power you experience with one student will help you get a feel for how it works and the confidence you need to start scaling it for your whole class—to zoom out."

Response to Intervention and its Connection to a Diagnostic Approach to Assessing and Teaching Reading

Our diagnostic approach to assessing and teaching reading aligns with intervention models that fall under the recent *Response to Intervention* initiative.

The 2004 update of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) specifies that it is no longer necessary to identify all learning problems (e.g., learning to read) as severe enough to be classified as learning disabilities. This policy is called *Response to Intervention*. See the Appendix for the International Literacy Association's Guiding Principles on RtI. The ILA commission on RtI summarizes the actual laws and provides clear principles for how to put the intent of the laws into action.

The three-step process entails providing children who appear to be struggling with the best possible instruction in the regular classroom and taking a look at how they perform. If the child makes little or no progress, the second step involves providing supplementary instruction, either individually or in a small group. The classroom

Bridge: From Understanding to Assessment

When teachers understand that _____,	then teachers will _____.
Diagnostic assessment depends on asking questions about individual readers,	Select and design assessment tools best fit to answer questions they have about individual readers. Not rely solely on information from required tests, because these tools are not usually selected with questions about individuals in mind.
Good questions arise from listening to and observing readers,	Take notes on reading behaviors. Make time to talk with readers about the invisible cognitive and affective processes during reading. Review their own understanding of important components of reading, such as texts, motivation, comprehension, vocabulary, or phonics, so they can make sense of observations.
Outside factors can impact reading,	Investigate the impact of outside factors before assuming anything about individual readers.
Meaningful data are those that answer specific questions about readers,	Use assessment tools that offer convincing and usable data about reading behaviors and about readers' cognitive and affective reading processes.
Strengths should be used to plan for needs,	Systematically gather and document strengths for each student that can be used to plan instructional situations.
Answers to questions about individuals can be "zoomed out" to find diagnostic patterns that apply to groups or a whole class,	Chart assessment data for whole classes to look for patterns. Rebuild groups regularly to fit known student strengths and needs, avoiding static ability groups. Be able to avoid the labels for readers that tend to come with ability grouping rather than diagnostic groupings.

teacher or another professional provides this instruction. If the child still makes little progress, additional tests are administered to determine whether there is a specific learning disability. If there is an identifiable disability, the child is assigned special education support and given more intensive intervention.

Intervention is a key word here. Just as with a *diagnostic approach*, RtI insists that identifying a problem early on and doing something to improve reading ensures that students will continue to progress in reading. The point of intervening is to avoid building patterns of frustration and failure so hard for young people and their teachers to overcome. And, as discussed in nearly every chapter in this book, there are important reading assessment techniques teachers can use to identify student strengths and needs beginning in preschool and kindergarten. Each technique is accompanied by teaching suggestions to assist teachers with planning appropriate instruction.

However, policies of intervention can come at a cost. Readers are acutely aware when instructional interventions turn into social groups. Stratifying classrooms into an economy of "haves and have-nots" is not the intent of Response to Intervention. It is well known that grouping already-strong readers together means that other groups get organized based on progressive identification of weaknesses—not strengths. Teachers must be prepared to group students based on strengths and flexible needs rather than contributing to the problem of tracking students in the early years of schooling. Teachers can be part of the solution by doing all they can to dismantle language that labels students, such as calling them "my high kids" or "my low kids."[3]

The climate of assessment in the United States pushes teachers to perceive children who have not yet learned to read by the end of grade one as deficient, and implies that these deficiencies are cognitive and must be corrected by teaching, and that difficulties with learning to read are unusual. A diagnostic approach should enable teachers to overcome these pressures: to focus on young people who are still learning to read as part of a normal spectrum of learning, and to understand that many of these readers' difficulties are social and affective rather than cognitive, and that reading is difficult for many normal people

to master.[4] All assessment and teaching strategies must be about ensuring learners receive the instruction that builds on strengths first. When teachers are asked to look at children's progress or lack thereof, looking beyond learners to the instruction they have or have not received is essential to ensure that they did indeed receive a fair chance to learn to read for their age.

What are Models of the Reading Process?

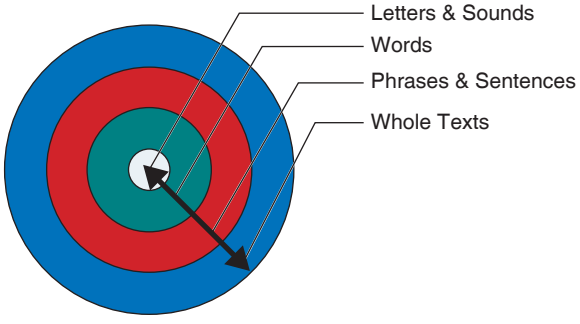
Definitions of reading are usually classified into one of three models. In fact, the field of reading is replete with theories, and different catchphrases are sometimes assigned to the same general theories, further confusing those who try to understand the various theories. Controversy has centered on whether the reading process is a holistic one (emphasis on meaning)—that is, a **top-down model**; a subskill process (code emphasis)—that is, a **bottom-up model**; or, more recently, an **interactive model**. The interactive model is somewhat but not entirely a combination of the top-down and bottom-up models in that both processes can take place simultaneously, depending on the difficulty of the material for the individual reader. (See Figure 1.1.)

There is widespread agreement that reading is a complex process orchestrating multiple areas of learning and development, not a single skill. Simply learning how to decode words with phonics does not result in reading if this is not paired with listening comprehension to result in reading comprehension. Listening comprehension is related to knowledge of word meanings (in speaking and listening vocabulary). Both of these aspects of spoken language can impact both word reading and reading comprehension.[5] Further, those who read with a sense of purpose and meaning make more appropriate strategic decisions when reading, as compared with readers who merely decode words accurately. Readers who are motivated and will engage in wide reading, and are more likely to apply skills than those who prefer not to read. Motivation and engagement go beyond the behavioral and cognitive and into the affective areas of human thinking. Teachers who teach with a diagnostic mindset work simultaneously across these areas, embracing reading as a complex process for any person, let alone the young people who are expected to master it!

Classroom practices are based on the theories that teachers embrace. Those who believe in a bottom-up model may emphasize decoding to the exclusion of meaning; those who believe primarily in a top-down model might emphasize meaning at the expense of word knowledge. Those who believe in an interactive model will probably use a combination of both.

Figure 1.1 Models of Reading

Interactive Model of the Process of Learning Reading. Learning to read is neither a bottom-up model only nor a top-down model only. In an interactive model, readers move back and forth between larger meaning and less meaningful pieces and parts of words. Learning about sounds and letters is informed by knowing that reading is about making meaning with texts. Likewise, purposeful meaning-making with texts motivates learners to master the less meaningful pieces and parts we use to make words, sentences, and texts.



Reading theorists sometimes tend to be exclusive; they promote their own theory and neglect others. The classroom teacher, however, need not accept any either–or dichotomy, but rather should seek a synthesis of all elements that have proven workable; that is, a classroom teacher can take elements from any research-based theories to best fit the individual strengths and needs of students. Good teachers realize readers are complex and that there are no one-size-fits-all answers.

Extreme perspectives prejudice teachers' diagnostic decisions, making it difficult for them to examine all aspects of reading. Each reader is different, and some readers' minds lean toward a top-down model, which needs to be nurtured as a strength while being balanced with attention to meaning. Likewise, some readers lean toward sense-making and pay less attention to phonics cues. This is a strength that becomes more powerful when balanced with usable phonics knowledge. In the interest of each individual student, the interactive version of the diagram shown in Figure 1.1 is designed to enable teachers to move back and forth between work with meaningful wholes, such as phrases, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and articles, and discrete parts, such as words, sounds, syllables, and letters. The interactive model of reading is more flexible than any model that assumes one direction of teaching works best for all learners.[6]

Defining Reading for a Diagnostic Approach to Assessing and Teaching Reading

Reading is a dynamic, complex act that involves bringing meaning to the printed page, and taking meaning from the printed page. Too often, educators view reading only as passive reception of an author's meaning. Cognitive research has demonstrated that strong readers bring their backgrounds, experiences, and emotions into play as they read. This research further implies that students who are upset or physically ill will bring these feelings to their reading, influencing their performance. Yet another implication is that a person with existing background knowledge from home, movies and games, or other books will gain more from reading the material than someone who is less knowledgeable. For example, a student who is a good critical thinker will gain more from a critical passage than one who is not. A student who has strong dislikes will come away with a different understanding and feelings than a student with strong likes related to a given text.

As this explanation suggests, the definition we choose influences the assessment and teaching of reading. This particular definition, for example, suggests that one would be interested in addressing students' backgrounds relative to a given text or topic, their feelings (or affect), and their overall wellness.

Our Definition

As noted above, we see reading as a balance between three domains. In Fitzgerald's review,[7] she characterized these as follows:

1. Affective: how readers feel and what they believe about reading. A clear body of research exists on readers' attitudes, identity, and interests. This research has been applied to both assessment and teaching.
2. Global: how readers think and process meaning when they read (comprehension) and when they think about their reading (metacognition)—cognitive and metacognitive processes.
3. Local: how readers use the structural parts of language to help them think. This includes how readers decode, apply vocabulary knowledge, and use their sense of syntax.

To teach these domains of reading well, teachers must ask and answer questions about all three aspects of reading for each student. This is foundational for diagnostic assessment. The affective domain has a governing effect on the global and local processes. That is, when students experience high interest, positive attitudes, and a strong identity with reading, these pave the way for progress in learning global and local skills such as comprehending sentences and paragraphs or identifying new words. Conversely, when readers experience unengaging material, develop negative attitudes, and believe reading is more for other people than for them, then teaching of global and local skills falls on stony ground—the seeds of teaching will not grow there! A comprehensive, diagnostic approach to assessment and teaching begins with the affective mind, and keeps its governing role front and center while asking questions about other aspects of reading.

Our diagnostic model puts teachers in a position of asking questions about these three domains constantly throughout teaching and learning. This is evident in the assessment tools we provide in this text.

Good Reader Characteristics

Teachers need to be mindful of what makes someone a good reader, because these characteristics help to set "big picture" goals for readers in a diagnostic approach to assessing and teaching reading. Regardless of how theorists frame the reading process and regardless of the definitions teachers adopt for reading, some reader characteristics remain constant and cut across all definitions.

Proficient readers have a large repertoire of strategies at their disposal, which they use to help them better comprehend the text at hand. (See Table 1.1.) The strategies they employ will shift, depending on their background for the text and the manner in which the text is written. If they have read and heard stories, for instance, they most likely have an understanding of story structure (i.e., the pattern used to write stories). This text structure poses few, if any, difficulties, so they are able to read with greater ease.

In essence, then, good readers are active, purposeful, evaluative, thoughtful, strategic, persistent, and productive.[8] We explain attributes of a good reader in Table 1.2. But what do we do with children who do not carry this label? Can we teach them the "good reader" characteristics? Thanks to the work of researchers who have designed metacognition learning programs to explore this question, we know that the answer is "yes." But the characteristics must be explicitly taught; for whatever reason, less proficient readers do not acquire them with as little explicit instruction as do many good readers.

Regardless of a child's level of proficiency, helping all children to maximize their full potential as readers is more important than assigning a label, a view that is supported by the Council for Exceptional Children.[9] Remember that the goal is to discover children's strengths and needs and to design appropriate instruction to address these. Put another way, children are always ready to learn something and our job as teachers is to figure out what that something is. Learning is what we're after. The success of education depends on adapting teaching to the individual differences among learners. The fact that children vary is natural; what is unnatural is to assume that all children are the same.[10]

English Learners in a Diagnostic Approach to Assessing and Teaching Reading

What we have said about the diagnostic approach in this chapter (and continue to espouse in the chapters that follow) applies to all learners, because we insist that individualization is central to successful reading instruction. English learners are children

Table 1.1 Summary of Proficient and Less Proficient Reading Behaviors

Proficient Reading Behaviors	Less Proficient Reading Behaviors
Attempt to make what is read sound like language and make sense.	Attempt to identify all of the words correctly.
Monitor what is read for sense and coherence.	Monitor what is read for correct letter/sound and word identification.
Build meaning using the text, the reader's purpose, and the reader's background.	Build meaning by attempting to identify the letters and words correctly.
Use a variety of strategies when a reader gets stuck on a word or phrase, and is losing both fluency and meaning: reread, rethink, read on and return if necessary, substitute, skip it, sound it out, seek assistance, use text aids (pictures, graphs, charts), ignore it, or stop reading.	Use a limited range of strategies when meaning breaks down: Sound it out or skip it.
Selectively sample the print; use a mixture of visual (print) and nonvisual (background) information.	Use most of the visual (print) information.
Use and integrate a variety of language systems to create meaning.	Rely heavily on graphemes, graphophonemics, and morphemes.
Vary the manner in which texts are read based on purpose.	Read all texts in a similar manner regardless of purpose.
Correct one in three miscues, on average.	Correct one in 20 miscues, on average.
Attempt to correct miscues that affect meaning.	Attempt to correct miscues that fail to resemble the word.
"Chunk" what is read.	Process letter by letter, which results in tunnel vision.

Table 1.2 Explanations of Good Reader Attributes

Good Reader Attributes	Explanation
Active	Readers bring their own experiences to reading the text and to constructing meaning. They make predictions and make decisions such as what to read and reread, and when to slow down or speed up.
Purposeful	Readers often have a purpose in mind when they read a text. For example, they might choose to read for enjoyment or entertainment. At other times, they might read to discover specific details.
Evaluative	Readers evaluate what they are reading, asking themselves whether the text is meeting their initial purposes for reading it. They also evaluate the quality of the text and whether it is of value. They react to the text both emotionally and intellectually. Readers also evaluate their interaction with others in different instructional groupings as well as their ability to function as both leaders and followers in the group.
Thoughtful	Readers think about the text selection before, during, and after reading. *Before reading*, they think about what they might already know. *During reading*, they think about how the current text relates to what they already know. *After reading*, they think about what the text offered and formulate their interpretations of it.
Strategic	Readers use specific strategies such as predicting, monitoring, and visualizing to ensure that they are comprehending the text.
Persistent	Readers keep reading a text even when it might be rather difficult if they feel that the text is helping them to accomplish a set purpose.
Productive	Readers are productive in more than one way. For instance, they bring their own experiences to the text at hand to construct or *produce* their understanding of it. Because they are engaged with reading, they are more productive in terms of the amount of reading they do.

Source: Based on Duke, N. K., and Pearson, P. D., "Effective Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension," in A. E. Farstrup and S. J. Samuels, eds., What Research Has to Say about Reading Instruction, 3rd ed. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2002, pp. 205–242.

who collectively bring a vast array of languages other than English to school. Because teachers may not know English learners' home language(s), the diagnostic approach to assessing, learning, and teaching might seem impossible. But this need not be the case.

Let's begin by understanding who English language learners (ELLs) are and how they become proficient English speakers.

Researchers have identified different levels of language proficiency through which language learners progress.[11] Figure 1.2 draws on these initial delineations of levels as well as others' adaptations of them.[12] Through it, we show the levels as delineated in the TESOL standards,[13] and provide a brief description of each. Keep in mind that when learning a new language, most people progress through these levels, regardless of age or grade in school.

Also, as Freeman and Freeman[14] make clear, language learning is not one single process. Rather, there are several lines of proficiency that develop, depending on social situations. When using language in less formal settings, such as when having conversations with friends, ELLs may demonstrate that they have acquired Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and be functioning at level 5 (bridging), an advanced level of language acquisition. However, these same learners can have difficulty using language in more formal settings, such as school, where they may demonstrate that they are functioning at level 3 (developing), the middle level of language proficiency. They need assistance in acquiring academic language. In other words, children who appear to be functioning at one given level are instead functioning at different levels, depending on how they are called on to use language.

Teachers should first learn all they can about existing literacy skills in home languages. Research clearly agrees that reading and writing practices in a home language can be used to the advantage of English learners, helping them develop reading processes and practices that can be generalized to English literacy.

Moreover, schools must survey the languages represented among students and provide contrastive analyses of home languages compared with English.[15] In particular, literacy teachers need to know major differences among phonemes and grammatical words. For example, many world languages have far fewer vowel sounds than English—the short-i and short-e phonemes do not exist in Spanish. The opaque and often illogical spellings of English vowels may be hard to master when some learners cannot yet hear these new phonemes perfectly. Many world languages do not have articles like *the* or *a*, instead having other ways to specify things about nouns. Such linguistic facts about home languages clearly have an impact on teaching reading and should be gathered and compiled for teachers to use in planning and administering assessments and instruction.

Figure 1.2 Levels of Language Proficiency, Descriptions, and Implications

Levels of Language Proficiency	***Description***
Level 1: Starting	Students have a limited understanding of English. They may respond using nonverbal cues in an attempt to communicate basic needs. They begin to imitate others and use some single words or simple phrases.
Level 2: Emerging	Students are beginning to understand some phrases and simple sentences. They respond using memorized words and phrases.
Level 3: Developing	Students' listening comprehension improves, and they can understand written English. Students are fairly comfortable engaging in social conversations using simple sentences, but they are just beginning to develop their academic language proficiency.
Level 4: Expanding	Students understand and frequently use conversational English with relatively high accuracy. They are able to communicate their ideas in both oral and written contexts.They are also showing the ability to use academic vocabulary.
Level 5: Bridging	Students comprehend and engage in conversational and academic English with proficiency. They perform at or near grade level in reading, writing, and other content areas.

Ages and Stages of Literacy Development

Reading ability continues to develop throughout life. For that matter, so do writing, speaking, listening, and viewing abilities. In fact, we might say that reading ability grows with active involvement in using oral language, print, and other media. In general, children at given ages share common characteristics in terms of reading and writing abilities. Different reading researchers and educators cast these characteristics into stages of growth to help teachers determine who is displaying age-appropriate reading behaviors.[16] Knowing some of these behaviors can also be extremely helpful in trying to determine who might need further assistance with learning to speak, listen, read, or write.

Table 1.3 shows the stages of literacy growth and some of their descriptors. Keep in mind that stages can overlap and that students rarely display every characteristic of one stage before they move into another. Many of the characteristics stay the same from

Table 1.3 Stages and Descriptors of Literacy Growth

Stage	Brief Description	Sample Benchmarks
Early Emergent.	Viewed as a foundation on which children develop oral language and a curiosity about print.	Attends to read-alouds.
Typically before kindergarten.		Uses oral language for different purposes. Likes playing with movable or magnetic letters. Knows several nursery rhymes. Uses paper and writing utensils to attempt writing.
Emergent Literacy.	Children show more interest in all aspects of literacy.	Retains oral directions. Enjoys tongue twisters.
Typically kindergarten; may overlap into the beginning of first grade.		Knows some concepts about print such as book parts, word boundaries, and how to handle a book. Recognizes and names most letters. Shows evidence of being phonemically aware. Can write own name. Uses some punctuation.
Beginning Reading and Writing.	Oral language facility expands. Children develop word analysis skills, and start to show fluency in reading and increased understanding of many words. Their writing begins to follow print conventions.	Uses increased oral vocabulary. Participates in discussions.
Typically first grade; continues into second and third grade for some readers.		Recognizes and names all letters in any order. Identifies many sight words. Uses phonics to determine word pronunciation. Uses a variety of comprehension strategies. Reads and retells stories. Enjoys writing. Uses a computer to write.
Almost Proficient Reading and Writing.	Children grow in their understanding of literacy. Oral language shows increased vocabulary, writing is more frequent, and silent reading increases.	Grows in use of standard English. Uses new oral vocabulary. Uses context to determine word meaning.
Typically begins at end of second grade and continues into fourth or fifth grade.		Self-corrects. Reads independently. Reads for many purposes. Begins learning research skills. Writes for many purposes. Shows growth in writing conventions. Chooses to write in free time.
Proficient Reading and Writing.	Children use reading and writing for a variety of purposes. The majority of skills are acquired and used as appropriate.	Listens to presentations with understanding. Uses oral language for a variety of purposes. Seldom needs help with word recognition.
Typically begins in fourth grade and continues through life.		Uses several comprehension strategies. Enjoys reading. Writes for many purposes. Edits own writing. Experiments with different writing forms.

Source: Based on Cooper, J. D., and Kiger, N. D. (2005). Literacy assessment: Helping teachers plan instruction. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

stage to stage, but they become more sophisticated. Also, as when anyone is learning something new, there can be plateaus. So, although the table shows a neat linear process that happens in a smooth tempo, in reality, the tempo of progress is marked more by stops and starts, or slowing down and then speeding up.

All of these stages are based on the assumption that children receive a tremendous amount of support and reading experiences on their way to becoming proficient readers. Gladwell has noted that expertise is usually linked to thousands of hours of experience.[17] Jim Loehr echoes and extends Gladwell by emphasizing that it is not only hours, but also intense cycles of engagement and rest that turn regular people into experts.[18] The key word here is *engagement*, and using our diagnostic approach to assessing, learning, and teaching reading capitalizes on it. That is, we are far more interested in helping teachers understand how to spend time with their students being engaged in reading—reading they will *want to* spend time on. When we talk to lifelong readers, we usually find that their reading history is punctuated by intense binges of reading followed by periods of less reading and/or lighter content. And this is exactly our goal for all readers. We want to enable them to find their way to this kind of investment in time and engagement.

Bridge: From Understanding to Assessment

When teachers understand that _____,	then teachers will assess _____.
Learning English involves not one but many proficiencies,	Students' knowledge of bookish or academic language in speaking and listening.
Response to Intervention means learning what will work best for each student,	Each student individually, and plan to design instruction to build on strengths first and needs second.
Each reader starts every school year at a different developmental level of reading and progresses at his own rate during the school year,	Interests, to learn what kinds of texts are likely to meet students halfway with existing vocabulary knowledge and motivation. Actual development, to learn what reading proficiencies students already have and to determine the reasonable range of just-right text levels.
Good readers orient many problem-solving strategies to comprehending texts,	Whether students approach texts purposefully, instead of out of compliance with school requirements.
The interactive model better explains learning to read for most learners than does a top-down or bottom-up model alone,	Whether students approach reading with balance between their orientation to meaning (comprehension) and their orientation to word parts (phonics).
Affective, motivational processes govern attention and persistence in reading tasks,	Interests, attitudes, and identity, systematically learning about strengths that can work to students' advantage and about motivational needs that block the effectiveness of comprehension and word instruction.
Global comprehension processes govern and guide the need for phonics knowledge,	Listening comprehension, retelling, and summarization.
Successes with learning words and word parts (local knowledge) affect both comprehension and motivation,	Knowledge of phonemes and phonics elements.

Revisiting the Opening Scenario

Now that you have had time to learn about the beliefs and components of the diagnostic approach to assessing and teaching reading that frames this book, reread the opening scenario. Which ideas does Ms. Prazzo best exemplify?

Authors' Summary

Before reading our summary statements for each outcome, we suggest you read each outcome and summarize it in your own words.

Once finished, cross-check your response with our brief summary to determine how well you recalled the major points.

1.1 Discuss the attributes of a diagnostic approach to assessing and teaching reading and the beliefs on which it is based.

- Teachers with a diagnostic approach use problem-solving tools to know each complex aspect of their students as readers. They prioritize discovery of student strengths, and plan learning and teaching activity to build on what readers already know and can do. As readers build on strengths, teachers help them to discover and achieve what they need to learn for ongoing growth. The diagnostic process is highly individualized, but excellent teachers learn how to manage and orchestrate it for groups and for whole classes of readers by zooming in and zooming out between individuals and groups.

1.2 Describe the basic ideas that form the foundation of Response to Intervention and how they connect to a diagnostic approach.

- The diagnostic process helps teachers continually adjust teaching based on student strengths and needs. This kind of ongoing adjustment by teachers in the interest of student growth is the heart of Response to Intervention.

1.3 Explain how reading can be defined and how doing so influences a diagnostic approach.

- Definitions of reading in research and curriculum programs determine whether they address the affective, global, and local aspects of reading. A diagnostic approach requires attention to all three, and teachers must learn to recognize when definitions of reading might prevent them from addressing all three. Many existing programs for assessment and teaching either ignore or address indirectly the affective aspect of reading. Because of its governing role, strong teachers learn to address this aspect as the top priority despite its exclusion from many programs.

1.4 Compare and contrast proficient and less proficient reading behaviors.

- Paying close attention to what good readers do helps teachers set and achieve goals for all readers. Knowing what less proficient readers do helps teachers attend to the potential buildup of frustration that comes from these behaviors. Often, these less proficient behaviors come from beliefs, attitudes, or feelings about reading or from misconceptions about what good readers do.

1.5 Define English learners and explain the levels of language proficiency through which they progress.

- English learners may speak more than one world language at home, but they are expected to use primarily English at school. The levels of proficiency from starting to bridging represent typical progress. Teachers who grew up using primarily English in many contexts must recognize that there is nothing wrong with students who are in typical stages of progress, and that these stages may progress unevenly for different social and academic uses of English (e.g., a learner may progress rapidly in English for friendship, but a bit slower for learning math and at a different rate for learning in social studies).

1.6 Construct a timeline that shows how readers change over time.

- This timeline helps adults recognize that their view of proficient reading develops over years and that there is nothing wrong with students who are in a recognized stage. It is important to remember the basic order of progress and to be able to diagram it.

Think About It!

1. You have been assigned to a special committee to develop a diagnostic approach to assess and teach reading. Discuss what factors you would consider in developing such a plan.
2. Ask a number of teachers how they define reading. Observe their classes and try to discern whether their reading program reflects their stated definition of reading. Discuss whether your observations show top-down, bottom-up, or interactive models of reading.
3. Observe teachers to determine how they assess, learn, and teach reading. Which combinations of elements seem to be most evident? How do you know?
4. Use Table 1.1, "Summary of Proficient and Less Proficient Reading Behaviors," to observe a reader. Highlight the characteristics you notice and provide an example of what you see.

Websites

- http://www.readwritethink.org
  A partnership between the International Literacy Association and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), this site provides professional resources.
- http://www.sedl.org/reading/framework/
  Providing a cognitive framework for reading comprehension, this site offers information on cognitive elements of reading, a glossary of reading terms, instructional resources, research, and other resources.

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Chapter 2

Factors That Affect Reading Performance

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Chapter Outline

Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to . . .

2.1 Differentiate between in-school and out-of-school factors that affect reading performance.

2.2 List and describe educational factors that can impact reading growth.

2.3 List and explain out-of-school factors that can impact reading growth.

Scenario

Cheyenne and Sara—A Study in Contrast

Mr. Ley knows the nationwide research showing that family income is powerfully related to reading successes and failures. He has students from homes with a wide variety of economic backgrounds. He wonders what actual factors are impacting each of these individual students. He decides to zoom in on two students, Cheyenne and Sara, to ask and answer questions.

Having met all of his students' families at back-to-school events, he knows Cheyenne's family lives in a middle-income neighborhood. Cheyenne's mom is a software engineer who travels regularly. Because Cheyenne is an only child, she often gets to travel with her mom. Mr. Ley reflects on the family's engagement with school and reading. Cheyenne completes all tasks he sends home, and brings her own books from home to read. Mr. Ley has used a "books in the home" survey with his class, and learned that Cheyenne has more than 100 books.

Sara lives in an apartment building with her grandmother, dad, and three siblings. Sara's family has a sandwich shop, which her dad owns and manages. Since her grandmother sometimes needs to work at the shop, Sara is often responsible for her younger siblings in the back room of the shop. After school she is often reading to her brothers and sister, helping them with their homework, or playing with them. Moreover, she has become good at a number of jobs around the shop. On the "books in the home" survey, Sara selected "more than 10."

Mr. Ley knows only a little about each child's home life. But he knows enough to create and manage authentic reading expectations for Cheyenne and Sara individually. He realizes that a great list of home circumstances creates challenges for him. He is likely to think he cannot help Sara and that he doesn't need to help Cheyenne. But both readers need and deserve instruction designed to help them move forward as readers, building on home literacy strengths.

Outside the classroom, he chooses to focus on Cheyenne's travel and Sara's life with family at the shop as ways to deepen and widen what counts as reading for school. Mr. Ley realizes both students can benefit from his focus on factors outside school, knowing each student's strengths may come from home, family, and community.

As Cheyenne and Sara's profiles help to illustrate, there are many factors associated with learning to read. Researchers have learned that for children who have difficulty learning to read across years of school, finding a path forward involves alignment of factors that cross the individual, the home, and the school.[1] In this chapter, we present a number of factors that cross these boundaries and explain how they affect reading performance. Although there may be some factors over which educators have little control (e.g., low income, little or no reading material in the home, and family structure), there are factors over which they have more influence. Understanding these factors puts teachers in better positions to set their students up for success.

Differentiating Between In-School and Out-of-School Factors

There are many ways to classify factors that affect children's reading performance. For the purposes of this text, we classify the different factors as either *in-school* or *out-of-school* factors. In Table 2.1, we provide an overview of these categories, a definition of each category, and a list of the specific factors we discuss in this chapter. When people talk about **in-school factors**, they generally are referring to factors that influence learning which come under the domain or control of the educational system. In this category, we would include the teacher, school materials, the instructional time, and the school environment. Under **out-of-school factors**, we would include family structure, home environment, physical health (general), vision, hearing, personality, and gender. Out-of-school factors are those that the educational system does not influence directly. Although the two categories appear distinct at first glance, a second look shows that many factors overlap. For instance, although gender cannot be influenced by the schools, gender-based social roles and cultural biases can be understood and addressed in school. A case can even be made for general physical health being influenced by educational practices. For example, children who are doing poorly in school may wish to avoid school to such an extent that they become physically ill every morning. Their emotional health influences their physical health so that they actually get a stomachache or headache, or throw up. Their emotional state may so affect them that they cannot eat or sleep. The physical symptoms are real, even though the cause may not be a virus or bacterium.

Rather than spending time debating which factors belong in one category or the other, the important idea is the interrelatedness among factors that affect reading performance. A child who has difficulty learning to read may have accompanying emotional and social problems. Clearly, when using a reading diagnosis and improvement program, many factors need to be considered in order to help all children advance in their ability to read.

In-School Factors

In-school factors are decisions made within the educational system. Examples are content (what is taught) and pedagogy (how these things are taught). Instructional materials, time, personnel, and facilities are also in the domain of the education system. If a child is experiencing difficulty in reading, it is generally a good idea to check her school record to see if there is any information that might shed light on the problem. From

Table 2.1 Factors Affecting Reading Performance

Category	Definition	Factors
In-school	Those factors that come under the domain or control of the educational system and influence learning	• Teaching methods • Instructional materials • The teacher • Instructional time • School environment • Diagnosed disability
Out-of-school	Those factors that do not come under the domain or control of the educational system and cannot be influenced by it	• Home environment • Dialect and language differences • Gender • Physical: illness and nutrition • Perceptual: visual and auditory • Emotional: self-concept, learned helplessness, motivation, and attitude

Source: Pearson/Hope Madden.

records, teachers may be able to learn more about methods and materials the child has been exposed to in previous years. For example, a third-grade student might appear to have difficulty with decoding. Yet examination of school records might reveal that this child has been in systematic phonics programs since kindergarten. Rather than reteaching systematic phonics from the beginning, another approach (e.g., literature-based phonics, chunking strategies, whole word, or language experience) would be warranted. The National Reading Panel's review of research on phonics has shown that the effectiveness of systematic, sequential phonics instruction decreases each year after first grade.[2] In this case, the *reading model* could be a major contributing factor to the problem.

Content

Schools are obliged to provide reading material that supports extensive reading. This means high-interest material for free reading and material chosen to support content areas such as literature, science, social studies, visual and performing arts, and physical education. One of the first assessments any teacher should make in a new job is an assessment of the classroom and school library resources. During the nationwide financial downturn starting in 2008, many schools cut resources for school librarians and the school library collections. Lack of funding for teachers' individual classroom libraries is a fundamental problem in many schools throughout the United States. Many teachers purchase classroom library books and magazines out of pocket. For this expense to be recognized, they have to wait each year to declare the loss on their tax return. Year in and year out, teachers purchase the books their students need as if this basic equipment for teaching reading were somehow unexpected by the school. Thus, availability of appropriate materials is far from standard from classroom to classroom.

One simple appraisal of support is to ask the school or district to provide the previous year's expenditures for school library and classroom library materials, and to ask to see receipts for commercial reading programs. These expenditures should be in a reasonable balance. The content and instructional routines in a commercial reading program have nowhere to go when a school or classroom has too few books for students to apply the skills and strategies they learn about in a commercial reading program.

Widespread differences in reading achievement are repeatedly explained by differences in oral language. However, schools often attribute all oral language proficiency to the home and fail to give students a full and rich curriculum in speaking and listening. The content of oral language is well known. The range of oral language genres includes conversation, oral storytelling, singing, reciting rhymes and poems, jokes and riddles, drama, topical discussions, and informational presentations—all genres with which people are familiar. Yet these speech genres must be included purposefully in the curriculum—they do not take care of themselves outside of school. Although oral language teaching is an investment that pays dividends in literacy success (for those whose home language is English, as well as for English learners), a well-articulated oral language curriculum is a rarity in today's schools. Teachers who see a widespread trend of low achievement in reading should not be surprised when they discover no curriculum for storytelling or conversation. Teaching speech genres during school has clear impact on students' awareness of how to use words and grammatical phrases in context.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is how content is taught. Researchers and educators have studied best practices in pedagogy for more than 100 years. Questions about effectiveness are often at the forefront of this research, and teachers can lean on a number of high-quality books that gather and summarize what researchers have found about teaching and learning reading. Gambrell and Morrow's *Best Practices in Reading Instruction* offers

16 summaries of research on high-value topics from motivation to comprehension, from phonics to fluency, and from intervention to English learners. The multiple volumes of the *Handbook of Reading Research* have done likewise, answering many key questions about what we have actually learned about topics such as how motivation affects skills and strategies, how metacognition affects comprehension and word identification, or how phonics processes actually work cognitively.[3] The *National Reading Panel Report* presented a meta-analysis of many statistical studies with an experimental design, to identify pedagogical techniques shown to be effective across multiple research studies. These results are worth searching partly because of the vibrant and thoughtful rebuttals that challenged the report's biases and findings.[4] Finally, some of the best answers to teachers' questions about learning to read were made available decades ago in the First Grade Studies, a series of research reports by many researchers who worked to answer teachers' most pressing questions about learning and teaching reading.[5] Over the decades, these studies have proven robust, because learning to read English print still involves the same processes it did many years ago. Today, recent and forthcoming researchers are still investigating pedagogy, including how digital literacy and multi-modal literacy are changing the landscape of reading and writing.

Instructional Materials

A former third-grade student of mine (MO) helped me to understand the importance of instructional materials—in this case the use of hardcover books instead of softcover books. We were provided multiple copies of the same text, some hardcover and others softcover. In the distribution, he was given a softcover text. Seeing this, he broke into loud sobs, saying that he couldn't read the book. In my effort to calm him, I assured him that of course he could read the book, and I pointed out the similarities of the versions. It didn't work. He kept crying, telling me I didn't understand. He was correct; I didn't understand, so I asked him to explain. He pointed out that in the softcover book, there wasn't as much space around the sides of the page and the lines were all squished together. Taking another look at the books, I saw what he was explaining and once again, I had to admit that he was correct. The hardcover book appeared much easier to read because of the extra space devoted to the margins and the line spacing. The problem was resolved by letting him read from a hardcover version—which he did with ease. The point here is that instructional materials matter more than we might think. The materials not only should be in alignment with the teaching approach, but also should entice children to read.

When a student resists reading, we need to take a look at what we are putting in front of the child to better understand whether this resistance is a problem with the child or a problem with the instructional materials. We then need to make any necessary changes to keep the child reading.

The Teacher

In the words of Albert Harris and Edward Sipay, "Teacher effectiveness has a strong influence on how well children learn to read."[6] Like other scholars, we could not agree more.[7] This is one reason we've devoted Chapter 6 to the teacher's role in reading diagnosis and improvement programs. Following are some teaching practices reading educators have seen contribute to reading problems:

1. Failing to ensure that students are prepared to learn a skill or strategy
2. Using reading materials that are too difficult
3. Pacing instruction either too fast or too slow

4. Ignoring unsatisfactory reading behaviors until they become habits
5. Rarely expecting a certain child to perform the same tasks required of others
6. Asking questions and then answering them without giving students time to respond
7. Failing to acknowledge student efforts when they try
8. Expressing disapproval or sarcasm when a mistake is made
9. Allowing other children to disparage a child's efforts
10. Expecting a child to perform a task in front of others that is difficult to do well
11. Expecting a child to do well or poorly because older brothers and sisters did so in previous years

Instructional Time

Sometimes research proves what common sense would tell us. A case in point is instructional time. As a result of Rosenshine's findings related to academic engaged time (i.e., the time students spend on academically relevant activities at the right level of difficulty), we now have proof that the more time students spend on a task, the higher their academic achievement will be.[8] And, as other researchers have reported, students spend more time on task when they are engaged with the teacher and the content. Let us always remember teacher enthusiasm! It can go a long way toward keeping students focused.[9] When students are not receiving instruction, individual work still needs to be meaningful and engaging. Independent activities need to extend and refine their reading abilities. It is well understood that reading extensively in just-right text is one of the best ways to grow in reading.[10] Instead of simply assigning free reading time, it is now well understood that teachers are central supports, instructing students in how to monitor their own independence and engagement with texts, and how to select texts that are likely to encourage persistence and effort. For too long, educators have assumed every reader already knows how to select and engage in just-right texts, because the successful readers do these things invisibly and automatically. It is often the job of teachers to make the invisible processes of successful readers concrete and knowable to students who need these processes.

School Environment

Context matters. When children feel safe, they are more likely to take the necessary risks and efforts on their way to becoming proficient readers.

Beyond safety, however the actual physical environment of the classroom has a great influence on learning. To become readers, children need to be exposed to much of print in many forms. A classroom full of print, such as children's literature, magazines, brochures, cookbooks, catalogs, comic books, and board games, sends a powerful message to students. A classroom littered with print on shelves, in bins, and on the classroom walls helps demonstrate that there are many reasons to read (and write). Moreover, readers need places to read where they feel comfortable and able to pay attention. A variety of locations designed for readers to engage in texts quietly and without distraction are also essential equipment for a successful reading classroom.

Diagnosed Learning Disability

Diversity in the classroom encompasses students with learning disabilities. Fortunately, there are by law professionals within each school whose job it is to understand disabilities and to help teachers plan appropriate instruction. We have put this factor last in the list of in-school factors on purpose. We echo veteran literacy educator Vivian Paley, who found that when children were struggling she was able to teach

them when she first looked within school for the source of the problem, not within the child. This is wise, because their own teaching is the arena in which teachers make decisions, and where assessment can be used to recommend changes. Often, learning problems have much to do with institutional structures and policies that affect literacy learning.

Specific learning disorders for reading frequently manifest in early childhood in phonological awareness.[11] Some estimates suggest between 10% and 20% of all people have difficulty perceiving spoken words in phonological pieces and parts such as syllables and phonemes.[12] Readers who perceive words mostly as a whole are common, and teachers should expect to see readers like this each year. Researchers have demonstrated repeatedly that readers can learn to perceive phonological parts of words with instruction, practice, and application to authentic reading. Because of this, assessments of phonological and phonemic awareness are part of the usual landscape of reading assessment. Early identification is important, because accommodations in primary-grades phonics instruction may be needed for students to experience successes in early reading.

Out-of-School Factors

Home Environment

Socioeconomic class, parents' education, and the neighborhood in which children live are some of the factors that shape children's **home environments.** Researchers have concluded that the higher the socioeconomic status of a family, the better the verbal ability of the children[13] and the better children usually achieve in school.[14]

Bridge: From Understanding to Assessment

When teachers understand that _____,	then teachers will assess _____.
How they teach is as important as what they teach,	Their own access to high-quality summaries of research on reading. Knowledge of best practice will help teachers form good questions about learners.
The depth of the literate environment determines whether students will be able to apply reading instruction,	The classroom library and school library to learn whether the collection of reading materials is broad enough to support each individual.
Learners read successfully when processes of meaning and decoding work together in an interactive model,	The policies and programs of the school to learn whether a single-direction model is favored at the expense of the other (top down versus bottom up).
Oral language proficiency has a great impact on success with reading books,	Students' knowledge of speech genres such as conversation, storytelling, drama, or information presentations. The curriculum to learn whether it invites or ignores daily speaking and listening.
Individual teachers are known to have the greatest effects on student achievement,	Their own pedagogy to learn which best practices can be put in place, and which poor practices can be eliminated.
Instructional time on reading is vital to success,	The schedule of the school day and week, to find many areas where reading will help students succeed (e.g., science, social studies, art, music, or physical education).
Public performances of reading can be among the most damaging to readers' attitudes and identities,	The schedule, to learn where large-group public performances might be replaced with safer pedagogy, such as reading partners or book clubs.
Learning disabilities are often compounded by difficulties with reading,	The curriculum, to learn whether individualized reading pedagogies have been applied well to each student.

Children who have adult language models and who are spoken to and encouraged to speak will have an advantage in the development of language and intelligence. Similarly, children who come from homes where there are many opportunities to read, where there are many different types of text, and where they discuss what they read with their parents will likely make reading achievement gains earlier than children without these advantages.[15] Some researchers have found that socio-economic status makes a difference in families' knowing what to do to boost their children's education at home. One group of researchers found that in homes where the mother had a high school education, the contributions of both mothers and fathers added up to early successes for their children in reading. However, in homes where the mother had a college bachelor's degree, the mother's educational activities alone were enough to result in the same successes. Fathers still contributed, but the mothers' influence alone was measured as enough to explain success for these homes. This is the kind of situation where a "Matthew Effect" can quickly appear for households with low income or high school education only—the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Households with college-educated mothers need only the influence of a mother thinking about her child's reading, whereas households with no more than a high school education need a wider network of people doing their part.[16]

The reader's home environment also has an impact. Teachers want to be attentive to whether a child is comfortable or in stress at home. Stress might include traumatic experiences, changes in who is present and not present at home, perception of safety at home, or the availability of places to do school work. Interestingly, whether parents were good readers or not does not appear to be a determining factor in reading successes or failures. What appears to be a more important factor is the number of books in the home.[17] This is heartening, because parents cannot change their own past but the literate environment of the home is something families, schools, and communities can address together. Another group of researchers found the interesting result that reading attitudes were affected less by home reading activities, and more by the simple frequency of parent–child interactions, and by parental expectations about reading.[18] Caregivers accomplish much simply by being with their children and making reading into a declared value of the family.

Language Differences

We live in a pluralistic society.[19] In a diagnostic approach to assessing and teaching reading, teachers must recognize that school classes will be a composite of children who speak many different languages. For example, one student might grow up with two non-English languages spoken at home (such as Spanish and Quechua), and another student in the same class may have grown up with both English and another heritage language spoken at home (such as in Navajo or Hindi families). Still others come from homes where only one language is spoken. English learners from various backgrounds face unique problems in phonology, orthography, grammar, usage, and pragmatics.[20]

The challenge teachers face is one of helping all students to value and develop their home language(s) while at the same time learning English as a new language.[21] Spanish is an important and widespread language in the United States. And yet we do ourselves and our students a disservice when we prepare only for Spanish–English diversity. Imagine a school where 65% of parents identify their children as coming from Spanish-speaking homes, and 34% from English-speaking homes. That leaves 1% of students who are not from either group. Good teachers learn how to design reading instruction for the 1% as well as for those speaking the dominant languages of the school population. They also understand that good teachers do not confuse variability with disability.[22]

In the United States, regional dialects differ very little from each other, perhaps almost exclusively in pronunciation. We would be more likely to speak of a regional "accent" than a "dialect."[23] Children who speak a variation or dialect of English or

another language are not inferior, nor is their heritage language inferior. Research by linguists has shown that many variations of English, including African American vernacular, that of Creoles from Caribbean islands, and Indian English, are highly structured systems and not accumulations of errors deviating from standard American English. Labov states that "it is most important for the teacher to understand the *relation* between standard and nonstandard and to recognize that *nonstandard English is a system* of rules, different from the standard but not necessarily inferior as a means of communication."[24]

To help children participate in the dominant cultures of power, we want them to become flexible language users—that is, we want to help them develop the understanding that every social situation may have its own rules for language. To successfully communicate with members of any given group of people, one needs to be able to switch registers as needed.

Gender

Preferences for texts are a key factor that distinguishes gender. One problem is that male students report a shortage of texts in classrooms and school libraries that hold their interest. Both male and female students need exposure to many different types of texts that will help each person to develop an identity as a reader.[25] Students who identify as transgender may have difficulty identifying with gendered book characters. Many authors of children's books avoid gendering their main characters at all to avoid problems with identification. Teachers need to be aware of how books represent gender and evaluate the classroom library collection accordingly.

Physical Health

Illness A child who is ill is not able to do well in school. This statement is obvious; however, it may not be obvious when a child is ill. A teacher needs to be alert for symptoms that may suggest a child is not well or is not getting enough sleep. For example, a child who is listless, whose eyes are glazed, who seems sleepy, and who actually does fall asleep in class may need a physical checkup.

The reason a child who is ill does not usually do well in school is always frequent absence from school. Children who have recurrent illnesses are generally absent from school many days of each school year. This lack of attendance can contribute to reading problems because it causes the child to miss important reading instruction and hours of in-school reading opportunities. In fact, such long absences, especially in first and second grade, are often a main reason children struggle with reading.[26]

Nutrition The effects of nutrition, and particularly malnutrition, on learning have been evident for a long time.[27] It should come as no surprise that children who are hungry and malnourished have difficulty learning. They cannot concentrate on the task at hand; they also lack drive. They simply lack the energy to perform at their best. For several decades, some researchers have suggested that severe malnutrition in infancy may lower children's IQ scores.[28] Other researchers have found that the lack of protein in an infant's diet may adversely affect the child's ability to learn.[29] Still others have found that the effects of certain food additives may be a deterrent to learning for some children.[30]

Childhood obesity is in the media spotlight; some even call it an epidemic and point to possible reasons why children are becoming obese in increasing numbers. Not surprisingly, nutrition is a major factor, as are the types of food that children consume. Is it any wonder that many children have trouble performing in school when they eat processed foods that contain a lot of sugar?[31]

Perceptual Factors

Vision and hearing are two key areas of perception in reading. Ruling out visual and auditory issues as factors that contribute to reading problems is important. For example,

Figure 2.1 Symptoms of Vision Problems

Child's Name: _____

Date of Observation: _____

Symptoms ***The child . . .***	***Yes***	***No***
1. Complains of constant headaches		
2. Eyes show some of the following: red rims, swollen lids, crusted lids, redness, frequent sties, watering		
3. Squints while reading		
4. Asks to sit closer to the board		
5. Can't seem to sit still while doing close-up tasks		
6. Holds reading material very close to face when reading		
7. Skips many words and/or sentences when reading		
8. Makes many reversals when reading		
9. Confuses letters		
10. Avoids reading		
11. Mouths words or lip-reads		
12. Confuses similar words		
13. Makes many repetitions while reading		
14. Skips lines while reading		
15. Has difficulty remembering what was read silently		

a struggling reader who also has astigmatism is at a heightened disadvantage. The same holds true for readers with auditory perception problems.

Visual Perception Sometimes children have difficulty reading because they need glasses. Yet visual problems are not always obvious and, as a result, are not always detected. (See Figure 2.1.) Most schools have some kind of visual screening. The most common screening is for **myopia,** or nearsightedness. The Snellen chart test is usually done by the school nurse. In this familiar test, a child must identify letters of various sizes with each eye. A score of 20/20 is considered normal. A score of 20/40 or 20/60 means that a child has defective vision because the child with normal vision can see the letters at a distance of forty or sixty feet, whereas the child with defective vision can only see these letters at a distance of twenty feet. Other tests are used to identify farsightedness (**hypermetropia**) and **astigmatism.**[32] Nearsightedness is more likely to impact reading in whole group instruction, when reading a screen or board from across the room. Farsightedness, although less common, is more likely to have a negative impact on individual reading of books.

Auditory Perception Sometimes children have difficulty reading because of hearing problems. Most schools have some sort of audiology screening that is administered in primary grades. These tests check for hearing acuity and hearing loss. School audiologists have the ability to follow up with tests on phonological processing, binaurality, and masking.

The acquisition of speech sounds for any given language is learned very early in life and is usually established before the child starts school. For children who speak languages other than English at home, distinguishing among English phonemes may be difficult, especially at the beginning of English language learning.

Emotional Well-Being

Self-concept, learned helplessness, motivation, and attitude are four aspects related to emotional health. Each needs to be considered when thinking about a child's emotional well-being and how it can affect reading performance.

Self-Concept Self-concept is the way an individual feels about herself. Although the verdict is still out on specific origins of self-concept, our lives are a testament to the fact that it exists and that it can change depending on the task at hand. For example, if we feel adequate, confident, and self-reliant about reading, we are more apt to be good readers. We would say that we have a positive self-concept as it relates to reading. However, if we are feeling less than adequate, have little confidence, and are not self-reliant about reading, we are more likely to be poor at reading. One factor to consider, then, is how children feel about themselves as readers. This can be discovered with a student reading perceptions and attitudes interview, such as Gambrell's Motivational Reading Profile.[33] Moreover, Harter's surveys assess students' self-perceptions of competence, and this survey can provide useful information about students' general sense of belonging with respect to school tasks.[34]

Learned Helplessness Related to self-concept is learned helplessness. When learners repeatedly experience failure at a task regardless of how hard they try, they are apt to develop the idea that they simply cannot perform the task; this is called *learned helplessness*. As a result, any time they are expected to perform the task, they become passive and wait for help. Children who feel that they simply cannot perform well at reading are likely to show avoidance behaviors. The important point to keep in mind is that learned helplessness is the child's viewpoint. Giving students many success opportunities over weeks and months of time will help change this viewpoint to one of competence and confidence.

Motivation Like Paris and Carpenter, we believe there are several components that facilitate *motivation* to read. These include how readers perceive their ability to read, the text, the reason for reading, and the surrounding environment.[35] Take, for example, children who attend an optional sleepover at school and are told to bring their favorite book for reading and sharing with others. Children who elect to attend the event are more likely to be motivated to read. After all, they get to choose the text with the purpose in mind. Self-selection means that they are likely to pick out a text they feel they can read with ease. They need not be embarrassed when they share a part of it aloud with another person. Likewise, because everyone will be reading, the environment encourages all children to do the same.

Attitude If we simply take a look at ourselves and our relationship to reading, we can fully understand what researchers have concluded over the years: *Attitude* is a major factor that affects reading performance.[36] In fact, a positive attitude can override missing skills,[37] enabling a reader to perform far better than expected based on past reading performances. A former student of mine (MO) helped me to understand this. She selected a book that presented many challenges for her—too many, from my perspective. As much as I tried to persuade her to read other, easier texts, she kept returning to "her" book and simply would not give it up. For whatever reason, she wanted to read the book, and after continual assistance, she read it with ease. What seemed like a miracle was a positive attitude in action. Deep down, she wanted to read the book and

felt that she could get it, and so she did. Excited about her newfound reading ability, I wondered whether she could read other texts at a similar level of complexity. My subsequent observations revealed that she could not. In fact, she often chose to read much easier books after she did a repeated reading of her favorite, but more difficult book.

Bridge: From Understanding to Assessment

When teachers understand that _____,	then teachers will assess _____.
Opportunities for speaking and listening vary widely across U.S. homes,	Student proficiency in oral language genres such as conversation and storytelling.
The home language of English learners is a strength on which to build,	Their knowledge of best practices for teaching English learners.
Chronic reading disabilities are diagnosed disproportionately among boys compared with among girls,	The classroom library to learn whether a wide variety of texts is available that either represents students' actual gender identities or favors no gender.
A variety of physical and perceptual processes can impact learning to read,	Students' access to physical activity and adequate nutrition during the school day. What is known about students' vision and hearing.
Emotional well-being can impact learning to read,	Students' self-perceptions as learners, their interests and attitudes toward reading outside school, and what motivates and engages them outside school.
Reading with adults who over-prompt and control reading can lead to a pattern of learned helplessness,	How frequently students turn to an adult or peer for prompts and other help during reading tasks. Themselves for knowledge of pedagogical techniques that encourage independence in problem solving during reading.

Revisiting the Opening Scenario

Having read about several factors that can affect reading, return to the scenario at the beginning of the chapter. Which of the factors discussed might be affecting each of these girls? Which factors are in-school and which are out-of-school?

Authors' Summary

Before reading our summary statements for each outcome, we suggest you read each outcome and summarize it in your own words.

Once finished, cross-check your response with our brief summary to determine how well you recalled the major points.

2.1 Differentiate between in-school and out-of-school factors that affect reading performance.

- There are many different factors that can impact children's reading performance. One way of thinking about these factors is to put them into two categories: *in-school* and *out-of-school*. *In-school* factors are those that come under the domain or control of the educational system. *Out-of-school* factors do not come under the domain or control of the educational system and often cannot be influenced by it.
- Regardless of how one chooses to classify the factors, the most important point to consider is that there are many interrelated factors that impact reading growth, and that any combination of them can exist. Looking at a variety of factors rather than one single factor is central to the diagnostic approach and critical to advance the growth of readers.

2.2 List and describe in-school factors that can impact reading growth.

- *In-school factors* in learning are those that come under the domain or control of the education system. These factors include teaching methods, instructional materials, the teacher, instructional time, and the school environment.
- When reading growth seems to be thwarted, there can be a tendency to see the lack as child-centered, when in fact educational factors can be major contributors to this lack of growth. For example, if children learn best in a more holistic manner yet are taught in a piecemeal fashion, they may not be able to make sense of the instruction. Therefore, they can fail to learn the content. In yet another example, if the classroom context is such that children feel threatened or unsafe, they are less likely to take the necessary risks to become competent readers. Although it takes courage, teachers must look at in-school factors to discover and address the direct or indirect influence these factors have on reading growth.

2.3 List and explain out-of-school factors that can impact reading growth.

- *Out-of-school factors* in learning are those that do not come under the domain or control of the educational system and often cannot be influenced by it. These factors include home environment, dialect and language differences, intelligence, gender, physical health, perceptual factors, and emotional well-being.
- Teachers can do little about out-of-school factors such as home environment, family makeup, or languages and dialects. However, becoming aware of the environments in which their students live enables teachers to provide experiences at school that either enhance or enrich their students' learning experiences and contribute to their reading growth. For some out-of-school factors, schools take an active part. For example, being mindful of nutrition and emotional well-being is essential because both are basic needs of all learners. Children who are well-nourished, have a high sense of self-efficacy, are motivated, and have positive attitudes about reading and themselves as readers stand a much better chance of becoming proficient readers. Schools take an active part when they provide breakfast and lunch programs, summer programming, and clearly defined opportunities for physical activity.

Think About It!

1. You have been asked to give a talk to your colleagues about why there are more reading disabilities among boys than among girls in the United States. What will you say?
2. How could the community be considered an educational factor that could affect children's reading positively?
3. Imagine a child who has multiple out-of-school factors impeding her reading success. How would you determine all the contributing factors?
4. A colleague is throwing up her hands in despair over her class's reading problems. Many of her students have multiple out-of-school factors that impact their reading. Explain how she can balance out out-of-school factors by strengthening educational factors.
5. There are many in-school and out-of-school factors that could affect reading success. Think of others that go beyond those already listed, and describe how they would affect reading.

Websites

- http://bookadventure.com/
  Although primarily devoted to children, this site also provides information for parents and teachers. For children, this site offers book lists, quizzes, and prizes, addressing external motivational factors. For teachers, the site presents activities and resources for engaging young readers.
- http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/
  The site provides information about the five components of reading and the difficulties occurring in each area. Within each section, the component is defined and described as to what the problem looks like from students', parents', and teachers' perspectives.

- http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/otherissues

  This page includes information on out-of-school factors affecting reading, including processing (auditory processing, phonological processing, and language processing), memory, attention, and English language learning.

- https://www.kidsreads.com/features/great-books-for-boys

  This site provides an extensive list of books for boys. Included are series titles and stand-alone fiction that cover a variety of genres: fantasies, mysteries, thrillers, action/adventure novels, and historical fiction. Although many of these selections also will appeal to girls, they are especially geared toward capturing the attention of boys, who are often much more reluctant readers.

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Chapter 3
Classroom Assessments

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Chapter Outline

Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to . . .

3.1 Describe a "big picture" view of assessment, putting measurement and evaluation in the proper place.

3.2 State the three guiding questions teachers can use to select the appropriate informal assessment tool, and provide one example.

3.3 Discuss the pros and cons of using performance-based assessment.

3.4 Explain how to use portfolios as a part of a diagnostic reading approach.

3.5 Discuss how a teacher using a diagnostic approach can use observation.

3.6 Explain what anecdotal records are and how they can be made objective.

3.7 Describe some of the various kinds of checklists and explain how a rating scale can be used with a checklist.

3.8 Explain what a teacher using a diagnostic approach can learn by using interviews, interest inventories, and attitude surveys.

Scenario

Teachers Talking

Read the following conversation overheard in the faculty lounge:

MS. ANDERSON: I don't know what to do with Hunter. His behavior is driving me crazy.

MR. DALE: Why? What does he do?

MS. ANDERSON: What doesn't he do? He's forever getting up from his seat. He can't seem to sit still for a moment. He's always disturbing someone. If there is any commotion in the room, you can be sure Hunter is there.

MR. DALE: Have you spoken to his parents?

MS. ANDERSON: Yes, but they say they don't see the same kind of behavior at home. So they feel that it's something related to school. I've just about had it.

MR. DALE: I know that I had another student who acted just like Hunter, and the behavior was making my life miserable. In my master's course at college, we discussed observation techniques to learn about student behavior. I decided to try it, and I was surprised how observation made me aware of how broad my judgments about Susan were. Would you like to see what data I collected?

What kind of data do you think Mr. Dale showed Ms. Anderson?

Assessment: The Big Picture

Assessment

Assessment is a term with powerful potential. In everyday language, it means simply figuring out what is going on. For example, when we walk into a room full of people, we assess the situation. When we are looking at buying a home, we might assess its condition or location. When someone bumps our car fender, we get out and assess the damage. Assessment in school must preserve some of this everyday meaning. Assessment helps teachers figure out what students know, what skills they have, what they can do, and whether they are learning anything. Because knowing someone else's mind can be tricky, instruments of measurement and evaluation exist to help teachers gain confidence in what they know about readers' cognitive and affective processes.

The terms *assessment*, *measurement*, *evaluation*, and *test* are often treated as synonyms. But they are not. This chapter is a chance for teachers reclaim the assessment process and make it work to the advantage of readers and teachers alike. We show these four terms as a hierarchy, with assessment as the primary category, measurement and evaluation underneath, and testing connecting to both measurement and evaluation. (See Figure 3.1.) We intend for Figure 3.1 to show that having knowledgeable questions about readers is the starting point for good assessments. These questions lead to measurement, or collection of evidence. Tests are common measurement instruments. Teachers must then evaluate the evidence, interpret the evaluation, and then check their interpretation against their original assessment questions.

Measurement

Measurement is how educators obtain evidence. It is parallel to evaluation in the hierarchy because without measurement, there would be no evidence to evaluate and interpret. The educational community leans heavily on metaphors of scales and rulers. These are literally instruments of measurement. Once we have the evidence from putting something on a scale or laying down a tape measure, then we can begin to evaluate what its weight or length means. Usually when we are measuring something, we have a desired "fit" in mind, a plan or purpose—that is, we don't usually just walk around weighing and measuring things for no apparent reason. It should be so with educational

Figure 3.1 Attitude Survey

Statement	Rating				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My friends think I am a good reader					
I read well compared to my friends					
When I read a difficult part in a book I usually figure it out					
When I read by myself, I usually understand what I read					
I am a good reader					
I worry about what other people think about my reading					
When a teacher asks me a question about what I am reading I can usually answer					
Reading does not frustrate me					
Reading is easy for me					
When people talk about stories, I like to talk about my ideas					
I sometimes read things that are for older readers					
When I read out loud I am not usually nervous					
TOTAL NUMBER OF MARKS IN EACH COLUMN					

assessment. First, we must decide *what* we want to learn about each reader; second, we must consider *why* those questions are important; and third, we must decide *how* to answer those questions. Any tool used in answering questions about readers' behaviors, cognition, and affects is part of measurement. Measurement instruments are the answer to the question of the "how" of assessment. In tests—one type of measurement instrument—the emphasis is often on readers using a question/answer sequence to demonstrate what they know. We find this narrow emphasis unfortunate. There are other important values in assessment which we discuss throughout this chapter.

The positive values of measurement outweigh the negative connotations often associated with tests alone. Measurement is useful for diagnostic, review, and predictive purposes. For example, a cloze test can be used to determine how much students use vocabulary knowledge to help them decode unfamiliar words; a response journal can be used to review engagement and motivation; and a listening comprehension test can be used to predict potential for reading comprehension. Measurement can be used as a motivating technique for students to help them self-monitor their own progress, and measurement also provides a basis for discussing achievement with families, teachers, administrators, and other community members. Through ongoing measurement, teachers are also able to reevaluate the strengths and weaknesses in their own pedagogy, their repertoire of teaching methods.

Diagnostic measurement means we puzzle out what data are needed and then figure out how to gather these data. When planning to teach an individual student, tests are only a part of the assessment picture because they may not provide the kind of evidence we want or need. For example, if we want to know whether a past traumatic experience affects a child's reading performance, we might use test data, but we would also use our own observations and reports from counseling and family conferences, and listen to students in regular conferences. All of these latter techniques are less easy to evaluate in a numeric score, but are more likely to provide answers to the actual questions we value about a specific reader. Evaluation in this case simply means working to achieving a satisfactory answer to the valued question about the reader.

For measurement to be an effective part of the evaluative process, teachers must know varied instruments and be able to select them, administer them, and interpret the results. Such instruments include standardized tests and teacher-made tests, as well as direct observations of student behavior. Further, student self-reports are also necessary in order to collect data for valid evaluations.

Evaluation

Evaluation is the interpretation of evidence gathered through measurement. When we have gathered evidence with measurement instruments, we return to the assessment question "What do we want to know?" and see whether the evidence provides a reasonable answer. The scores on a test are one type of evidence, but they mean nothing in and of themselves. They have to be interpreted with respect to *why* we used the test as a measurement in the first place and *what* we hoped to learn about our students. When we write our own tests, we can track student responses back to individual items and also look for trends across items. By contrast, standardized test authors usually keep both test items and student responses private, providing general results within a category of items. Teachers must rely on the testing company to score the test and evaluate the results. The main benefits and risks of standardized tests will be discussed in Chapter 5. Classroom assessment is discussed first because classroom assessments are the main means for answering questions about individual readers throughout the school year. In particular, diagnostic assessment depends on using a variety of classroom-based tools designed to answer typical questions teachers and readers have about learning to read. Classroom assessments give teachers the opportunity to own the processes of measurement and evaluation when they select the appropriate tool for the job.

Evaluation, one of the roles of a good teacher, is to interpret evidence gathered through assessment. Basic principles of assessment design are supposed to give teachers confidence when interpreting evidence. The *teacher* is the one who makes the diagnosis; no single test asks and answers the specific questions teachers have about individual readers. Once again, the knowledgeable professional is at the core of decisions that will lead to reading improvement.

Tests

A **test** is one way to provide evidence for evaluation. We use tests when other classroom instruments do not give us confidence in what we know about our students. For example, we might have rich classroom discussions about a book but still worry that only some students comprehend. A test is a way to give each individual a chance to provide evidence of knowledge. If previously silent students respond well on written tests, confidence in their knowledge increases.

We might need the confidence of evaluation when trying a new method or program, when our school is compared with other schools, or when our country is compared with other countries. We might have doubts when we compare one student's skill with other students' skills or with what is typical for an age grade. A variety of assessment methods, including tests, can inspire confidence in our evaluation of students' knowledge, abilities, and performance. One of the best reasons for using tests is that good test design provides confidence that responses represent students' thinking. The best reason to go beyond tests is to increase confidence that we understand how students apply knowledge in authentic reading and writing situations. Teachers taking a diagnostic approach will ask what they want to know, why they want to know that, and how they can best learn this. The next section provides a guide for understanding these situations.

Diagnostic Questions

Teachers using a diagnostic approach need to ask and answer three diagnostic questions related to reading assessment: What do I want to know? Why do I want to know that? How can I best discover this information? In this chapter, we focus on asking and answering these questions using various classroom-based assessment tools. These tools are more open to bias than standardized measurement tools presented in Chapter 5. But in many cases, subjective understanding gained by someone close to a student is exactly what is needed to find the best path forward for each student. Classroom-based assessment tools provide a foundation for interpreting and better understanding test data; they help explain why and how students performed as they did on a test. Your specific purpose (the *what* and *why* questions) guides your selection of the assessment tools you actually use (the *how* question). In Table 3.1, we provide an overview of classroom-based assessment techniques reviewed in this chapter. Chapters 4–13 will feature a wide range of classroom-based assessment tools appropriate for answering diagnostic questions.

Authentic Assessment

The assessment techniques outlined in this chapter all rely on authentic reading experiences and situations. Whereas test situations are contrived and separated from real-world experience, we can learn much about readers through "direct, 'authentic' assessment of student performance."[1]

In a reading diagnosis and improvement program, looking at both the cognitive and affective characteristics of students is important. Attitudes and interests will affect what readers learn and whether they learn because these affective characteristics of readers determine effort and persistence. Unfortunately, many students are not choosing to read. The reasons for this lack of interest in reading are varied. Understanding students' attitudes and interests enables teachers to teach for motivation and to help

Table 3.1 Authentic and Performance-Based Assessment Techniques

What Do I Want to Know?	Why Do I Want to Know?	How Can I Best Discover?
Do the children use what they know about reading regardless of what they read?	To show competence in reading, children need to show that they can use what they have learned. I need to see if they can do this, and if they cannot, I need to determine why.	Performance Assessment Project
Do children show growth over time?	Children continue to grow as readers, and I need to provide evidence of that growth. I want to be able to show the kind of progress the children are making.	Portfolio
How do children perform in a variety of contexts?	Watching children as they perform a variety of reading-related tasks is an excellent way for me to see firsthand what they are able to do. I can also develop intuitions about what they do well and what might need additional work. I can use these observations as a way of selecting additional reading assessments that will help me to better understand the children.	Direct Observation
How can I remember everything I see when observing?	Watching children can help me to learn more about them, but I simply cannot remember everything. I also need a way to document what I have actually observed as a way of showing others that I have detected a pattern of behavior that sheds light on a student's performance.	Anecdotal Record
What specific behaviors do the children show when they complete reading tasks?	There are a variety of behaviors that children need to exhibit on their way to becoming accomplished readers. I need to determine which they show and which they need to learn, and to be able to document this in a quick and clean way. I can then use the results to plan appropriate instruction.	Checklists
How do the children view reading?	Faulty perceptions of what it means to read can inhibit reading growth. Uncovering the children's views can help me to see which are correct and which need to be added to or altered.	Informal Student Interview
What reading strategies do children think they use when they are reading?	Good readers use a variety of strategies to assist them as they try to comprehend a text. Relying on one or two strategies to the exclusion of others can prevent growth. I need to know which strategies readers do and do not use so that I can help all the children to develop a full array of strategies.	Informal Student Interview
What do children like to read?	We are more prone to read if we are interested in the reading material. Identifying the children's interests can help me to select texts for instruction and inclusion in the classroom library. I can also use interests to group children in different ways, making it possible for them to work with a variety of peers.	Interest Inventories
How do children feel about themselves as readers?	Feelings of self-efficacy play a big part in reading success. I need to know how students feel about themselves as readers. Then I can identify children who view themselves as failures and work to help them gain confidence as competent readers.	Projective Strategies Reading Autobiography
What kinds of attitudes do the children have about reading?	Attitude has a big impact on reading. Identifying attitudes will help me to see if I need to help a child develop a more positive outlook, which will make reading a more enjoyable experience. Children with a positive attitude are more likely to attempt reading.	Primary Reading Survey Reading Attitude Survey for Grades 3 and Up

students shape their attitudes toward reading. In one recent study, researchers reported that comprehension was impacted more by intrinsic motivation to read than by the amount students read.[2] Affective concerns impacted valued outcomes even more than practice with reading did. Students can provide valid information about their own learning that cannot be gleaned from other sources.

Student Interviews

The easiest way to learn about students' likes or dislikes is to ask them. Teachers should set up special times during the school day to meet with students for conferences, which can include an **informal interview.** Doing so helps teachers build rapport with students, as well as yielding important information about them.

Another purpose for interviewing students who are having difficulty with reading is to gain insight into how they perceive reading.[3] Because perception determines behavior, a change in behavior follows rather than precedes perceptions. To change reading behaviors, the students' perceptions of reading must also change. Thus, gaining an insight into students' existing perceptions assists the teacher in better understanding why students function as they do. Researchers recently found that many students

are not largely aware of their self-perceptions of reading. This may mean the stigma of reading poorly does not impact overall self-perception of competence for all students the way adults might predict for them. But it also may mean that many students are not given direct opportunities to self-assess their own growth, proficiency, strengths, and weaknesses in reading.[4]

A third purpose for interviewing students is to enable them to explore their own reading behaviors—to help them understand themselves. In talking about their reading, students become more aware of how they perceive and approach it. Self-awareness is essential because it is the first step toward change. Thus, becoming aware of their perceptions about reading can help students realize whether these perceptions are accurate and, if not, which additional aspects need to be incorporated into their understanding of the reading process. For example, the first three questions in Figure 3.2 are designed to elicit students' perceptions of their purposes for reading. A student who responds "I'm trying to understand the story" or "Get the words right so I'll understand the book" is showing a perception that emphasizes comprehension.

In addition, becoming more conscious of the strategies that they presently use in reading may, with teacher guidance, lead students to see there are additional strategies

Figure 3.2 Student Interview Protocol

Name: _____

Student Interview

1. What is the most important thing about reading?

   _____

   _____

2. When you are reading, what are you trying to do?

   _____

   _____

3. What is reading?

   _____

   _____

4. When you come to a word you don't know, what do you do?

   _____

   _____

5. Do you think it's important to read every word correctly? Why? Why not?

   _____

   _____

6. What makes a person a good reader?

   _____

   _____

7. Do you think good readers ever come to a word they don't know? If yes, what do you think they do?

   _____

   _____