

Using Assessment to Differentiate Instruction

Oregon Department of Education

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBxnJNoeON4>

Narrator: In this video, we will hear educators respond to the question, how do you use literacy assessment data to support your students' learning? We will first hear from Marissa Quesada, kindergarten and first grade teacher, then Francesca Aultman, district language arts specialist, and then Bekah Sabzalian, education consultant. Including students in assessment.

Marissa: I differentiate in the classroom by starting with a universal screener. So I look at the data for my universal screener, which we use Acadience, and I look at the students who have well below typical pathways of progress. And then I take those students and I administer a diagnostic. So I use the core phonics screener because especially in first grade, it allows me to see if they have their vowel sounds, consonant sounds, digraph sounds, CVC words, all the way up until second grade level. So I look at that diagnostic and I look at areas of strength and I also look at areas that they might need a little extra support in. And I use that to make skills-based groups. So my reading groups are very fluid and flexible. I pull the groups based on what I can see that we need to work on. And as soon as you have it mastered, we move on to a different group. And it really reduces stigma because everybody is in a small group and your group changes all the time. Building deep relationships with my students over time has been really important because I can see specifically where their skills are and areas that I can help them improve on.

Narrator: Students as partners in assessment.

Francesca: When I think about using formal and informal assessment to be able to meet the needs of my learners, I really think about where does each assessment fit into the larger picture and what am I trying to address with that assessment? I think that's really the key beginning step is thinking through what is it that I need to know? What am I going to do with that information? How am I going to share it with students? And so all the way from formal end of year summative assessment down to a conversation I have with a student that gives me some information about their knowledge, I think all of that plays a part in our overall assessment picture of a student. One of the things that I really think has elevated my understanding of assessment and my ability to bring students into their assessment process has been to utilize success criteria. I really try, when I'm sharing a learning target with students, to share not only what it is that they're going to do, but why they're going to do it, and then how they're going to demonstrate that learning to me.

Bekah: It's important to use literacy assessment data to structure your learning and to ensure that you are meeting every student's needs and you understand where they're at and how they can grow and what they need to grow and what they're strong at, too. When we're talking about assessment and talking about getting students involved in their own learning, they should have access to the assessments and they should learn explicitly what the numbers mean, what the assessments mean, where their goals are. Do they want to get there? How do they feel about it? And it takes more time, but I have done it. I mean, I've put it into practice in my own classroom where we're doing assessments. We're talking about what does it mean, right? What do the numbers mean? And then where they're strong first, always where they're strong. Before I even tell them where they need to go, I ask them, where do they want to go? How do they feel about whatever the subject matter is? And generally, students want to improve if we let them say they want to improve. That's usually their goal. And then if you tell them what the assessment means, then they know where they want to go.

Narrator: To learn more, visit the framework website at oregoninstructionalframeworks.org and download the Early Literacy Framework.