Assessing Reading and Writing
“But we have received a sign, Edith—a mysterious sign. A miracle has happened on this farm. There is a large spider’s web in the doorway of the barn cellar, right over the pigpen, and when Lurvy went to feed the pig this morning, he noticed the web because it was foggy, and you know how a spider’s web looks very distinct in a fog. And right spang in the middle of the web there were the words ‘Some Pig.’ The words were woven right into the web. They were actually part of the web, Edith. I know, because I have been down there and seen them. It says, ‘Some Pig,’ just as clear as clear can be. There can be no mistake about it. A miracle has happened and a sign has occurred here on earth, right on our farm, and we have no ordinary pig.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Zuckerman, “it seems to me you’re a little off. It seems to me we have no ordinary spider.”

*Charlotte’s Web* (White, 1952)

Marissa, grade 2

Mrs. Zuckerman was right. Paying attention to what is going on in the barnyard is sensible advice for a farmer. The same holds true for the classroom. When teaching, you need to know your readers. Think about that as you answer the questions in the Personal Reflection.
Personal Reflection

What do you need to know about your students before you begin to teach them about literacy? How can you find out?

To help you think about how you view learners, let me tell you a story about a first grade teacher, Mrs. Edwards, and one of her students, Christopher.

Mrs. Edwards’ Lesson

Early in the school year, Mrs. Edwards was conducting an individual reading conference with Christopher. She told him that she wanted him to read aloud to her from the book *Monkey See, Monkey Do*, by Marc Gave (1993), but that he could read it silently first. The book is a very simple rhyming picture book, leveled for beginning readers. After a few pages, he was visibly upset, and he tossed the book aside.

“I’m not reading that book anymore. It’s stupid,” he muttered.

“But, Christopher, you seemed to be enjoying the book. What’s wrong?” Mrs. Edwards asked.

“It doesn’t make sense.”

“Show me what doesn’t make sense.”

So Christopher reluctantly picked up the book and turned to the page that read: “Monkey in the middle. Monkey out of sight.”

“What’s wrong with this page?” Mrs. Edwards asked.

“It says, ‘Monkey out of sig-ut.’ That doesn’t make sense. That’s stupid.”

Smiling, his teacher said, “Chris, you’re absolutely right. The word that you are saying does not make sense. In fact, it’s not really a word. I’m so glad you figured that out! Now, let’s see if we can figure it out so that it does make sense. Look back at this page, at this word.”

She pointed to the word “right” on a previous page, knowing that he had recognized the word earlier. She then asked, “Do you see how similar they are? They’re the same except for the first letter. Do you remember how to say this word?”

Christopher said, “Right.”

“That’s correct,” Mrs. Edwards said. “Now, figure out the one that didn’t make sense to you.”

“S-s-sight. Sight!” said Christopher. “Monkey out of sight!”

“Hooray for you!” she said, as Christopher continued reading the book.

Mrs. Edwards’ first reaction was mild concern. Tossing books aside in frustration is not the kind of behavior that teachers like to witness in their students. But she knew that it was important to get up close and pay attention to Christopher’s error.
And once she did that, she discovered that his decoding skills were well developed, and that he was using many clues to figure out what he did not know. More importantly, Mrs. Edwards discovered that he viewed reading as a meaning-making process, and expected nothing less from books than a good read; hence his frustration when the page did not make sense to him. Based on this observation, Mrs. Edwards knew that Christopher was good at monitoring his own comprehension, and decoding letter by letter. She also determined that he would benefit from more work in viewing words as members of word families.

As you can see, the careful observations made by the teacher are very important. Even more important is the attitude of the teacher as she observes. You’ve heard the cliché, “The glass is half full, not half empty.” These truly are words to live by in the classroom. When children make mistakes or refuse to complete tasks, we need to gather information from this behavior. We are much better off trying to figure out what children do know, rather than what they do not know, because what they know gives them a place from which to grow.

When Christopher threw the book aside in frustration, his teacher could have assumed that the book was too difficult and told him to choose another one. She could also have assumed that he was having difficulty with decoding because he couldn’t figure out the word “sight” on his first try. But in getting up close and asking questions, she discovered that he knows a lot about decoding and making meaning as he reads, because he figured out a pronunciation for the word and tried it out in the sentence. This produced nonsense for him, and that, he knows, is not supposed to happen when one reads. Thus, she could guide him back to comprehension by helping him connect the unknown word, “sight,” to a known word, “right.” Once that happened, he was on his way to finishing and enjoying the book.

What should you know about your students? Your answer to the Personal Reflection question depends on what you think is important for learners to be able to do as they read and write. In a model of the reading process, Ruddell and Unrau state, “Readers—even beginning readers—are active theory builders and hypothesis testers” (2004a, p. 1463). This is the view of literacy taken in this book; learners are involved actively, not passively, in their quest to make sense of the printed word. This is the engagement perspective, which is described by Wilkinson and Siliman as a view of teaching and assessing that “emphasizes students’ active learning” and “focuses on motivation for reading.” When teachers instruct and assess in such a way that oral and written language learning are integrated, and students are guided to become “motivated, strategic, and competent readers,” the use of alternative assessments is a necessity, because the mastery of certain aspects of reading can be revealed only by rich qualitative data” (2000, p. 352).

Viewing the student as an active learner affects the way you teach, as well as the way you assess. If you assume that students are trying to make sense of the printed page based on what they know, you can guide them in that direction when they falter. Moreover, if you assume that the learner is actively pursuing comprehension while reading and writing, you will realize that one standardized, multiple-choice test per year will not yield the information that you need to make teaching decisions for each student in your classroom.
Diversity in the Reading Classroom

High-stakes testing is when the results of standardized tests—usually based on state standards—are used to punish or reward schools. Federal and state monies are awarded based on results of these tests; additionally, results are publicized so that parents—and perhaps even teachers—can make decisions about leaving a school that performs poorly. The premise behind standards-based education is a commendable one; it is hard to argue that any child should be "left behind." However, this type of testing and use of the data often results in merely rewarding or punishing educators, without providing support for serving the students who need the most help. In fact, Au says, "Placing a premium on achievement results alone may discourage schools from making a commitment to serve struggling learners of diverse backgrounds or to keep these students from leaving school" (2000, p. 845). Testing programs often "drive out thoughtful classroom practices" (Shepard, 2004, p. 1,622), especially for students of diverse backgrounds.

There are several ways that teachers can meet the needs of these students, at the same time honoring the premise that high standards are desirable for all learners. Some suggestions include:

- Review state standards and the tests that assess them so that you are familiar with the things that are asked of your students (Temple, Ogle, Crawford & Freppon, 2005).
- Have older students keep two sets of notes. One set would be for real knowledge needed for a task, and the other set would be for skills and knowledge needed for the test (McNeil, cited in Shepard, 2004).
- Make assessment part of your instruction on an ongoing basis. Do not wait until the spring of the year to find out about your students, based on the results of their standardized tests. Keep records of their reading and writing abilities in the classroom all year long (Glazer, 1998).
- Increase your students’ self-efficacy, which is their belief that they can handle the tasks of literacy. Teach strategies such as using prior knowledge and self-monitoring to build students’ self-confidence in tackling literacy tasks (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).
- Have high expectations and teach toward those expectations (Au, 2000).
- Give students practice for a skill, task, or strategy in a variety of situations (Shepard, 2004).

Formal assessments of your students’ achievement, such as standardized tests, will give you one snapshot of their learning, and will undoubtedly be an important part of your classroom life. Standardized tests are those that are created by commercial testing companies or state educational agencies to compare a student’s performance on a variety of literacy skills to the performance of students in the same grade level across the country. Usually, results from these tests determine students’ eligibility for special services in school. They are also particularly important in today’s classrooms because of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This federal law states that all public school students must be tested in grades three through eight, beginning in the 2005–2006 school year. Schools will be compared with the data from these tests. Parents of children who attend schools that do not perform at the “proficient” level for their state standards may receive vouchers to send...
their children to other schools. Thus, parents and caregivers, administrators, and politicians will be extremely interested in the results of these tests. It is your responsibility to make sure that your students are comfortable with these types of tests and do well on them.

At the same time, it is your responsibility to make sure that such tests do not take over your curriculum. Standardized tests are not designed to help you plan individual instruction. Shepard states, “Yes, end-of-year tests can be used to evaluate instruction and even tell us something about individual students, but such exams are like shopping mall medical screenings compared to the in-depth and ongoing assessments needed to genuinely increase learning” (2004, p. 1,633). Alternative assessments are those that go beyond formal standardized tests. These assessments include those in which the “actual language and literacy behaviors of students are described over time, and the progress of individual students is documented” (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000, p. 353). This type of assessment is done frequently; usually, at least weekly. It includes a collection of the student’s writing as well as records of reading abilities in a variety of situations. These are informal measures, which include data gathered from anecdotal notes from observations, reading and writing strategies checklists, samples of student writing for portfolios, interest inventories, running records of oral reading, decoding checks, concept of print observations, and many others. Assessments such as these are not standardized, and are generally created by the teacher to give an in-depth look at specific objectives that the teacher has taught on an ongoing basis. These types of informal measures of your students’ abilities give you the complete picture of their literate lives.

In this book, assessments are viewed from the engagement perspective. This approach means that a variety of assessments are necessary. This chapter will show you what to look for as you get to know your students. It will introduce to you the factors that affect the development of someone who can read and write and chooses to do so. It will also help you make decisions that will enable you to teach in such a way that all of your students care about their learning. Most importantly, it will show you how to get up close as you observe children, and really look at what they are accomplishing as they learn. There are many assessment tools introduced in this chapter; however, as you read this book, you will discover additional ways to assess your students while they read and write in each chapter. Throughout this chapter and the rest, you will learn how to look beyond a single test score on a standardized test, and watch what happens when your students read and write.

What factors influence your students? What is important to know about them as you teach literacy? In the next several sections, I will introduce factors that influence your students’ performance in literacy tasks—affective as well as cognitive factors. We’ll look at these separately, and examine how they influence reading as well as writing behaviors.

### Affective Factors

When you wrote your ideas in the Personal Reflection, did you include interest-related things? Did you want to know your readers’ hobbies, likes, and dislikes? If so, you were interested in the affective knowledge of your students. The affective
domain of human thinking is concerned with feelings and emotions. The power in your teaching lies in your ability to make your learners care. When you know what your readers do in their spare time, what motivates them, and the kinds of books that they would enjoy, you can reach them in ways that you otherwise would not. More important, as Calkins observes, “Children should immediately and always sense our interest in the wholeness of each of them as a reader” (2001, p. 141).

Knowing your students’ affective concerns will help you to teach to children’s hearts. If you can connect new understandings with the things they care about, your job becomes much easier. Thus, you need to know your students. You need to find out their interests and attitudes towards reading and writing.

How can you do this? There are several ways to assess your students’ affective lives: conversations, interviews, observations, interest inventories, and attitude surveys. Let’s look at those now.

**Conversations and Interviews**

One of the most exciting things about teaching is getting to know your students as people. A fine teacher I know, Mr. Vaughn Dailey, once told the parents of his students at an open house night at the Pennsylvania middle school in which he taught, “One thing I never forget is how important these children are to you. I hope to get to know your child and see him or her in the same way you do—as a very precious human being.”

It is important to start at the beginning of the school year. In personal interviews, you can ask your students questions that help you to get to know them, especially the kind of reader that exists within themselves. Calkins advocates asking questions about how they view reading and how reading fits into their everyday lives (2001, p. 142). Likewise, you can ask questions of your students about how they view writing and how they view themselves as writers. Examples of such questions are shown in Figure 4.1.

Taking notes during a brief interview is helpful; asking older children to respond in writing to one or two of these questions will give you many insights into their literate lives. In addition, this sets the stage for promoting literacy in your classroom. When you begin the year with the conversation focused on reading, children see right away that reading and writing are valuable to you, and will be a part of the everyday life of your classroom.

**Observations**

Make a regular habit of watching children as they learn. Appropriately, Yetta Goodman calls this *kidwatching* (1978, p. 37). While it may seem obvious that a teacher needs to watch the kids, this type of assessment is easily swept aside in the everyday bustle of the classroom. Make anecdotal notes, which are useful for gaining and storing information about how a child approaches reading (Au, Carroll & Scheu, 1997). One way to manage this technique is to set up an observation plan. Set a goal to talk with at least five students per day, and write notes on their strengths and needs. Resolve to maintain a system of note taking; make these observations a part of your daily plan. As you observe your students, make notes
Questions to Ask about Reading Relationships

- What do you do when you read?
- With whom do you share books?
- What is the best part about reading?
- What is the worst part about reading?
- When you’re at home, when do you read?
- Tell me about how you read.
- What kinds of reading material do you have at home?
- Who reads a lot at your home?
- What do you like about reading at school?
- What do you dislike about reading at school?

Questions to Ask about Writing Relationships

- What kinds of writing do you do?
- When do you write?
- Why do you write?
- What is the best part about writing?
- What is the worst part about writing?
- Who writes a lot at your home?
- What do you like about writing at school?
- What do you dislike about writing at school?

accordingly, and concentrate on finding what the child knows about reading, you will experience the joy and excitement in children's learning. Below are a couple of ways to keep track of these observations.

- **Five-a-Day Folder System.** Obtain five different-colored file folders, one for each day of the week. On the outside, label each folder with a day of the week. Inside each folder, attach five 5” × 7” index cards, accordion-style. On each index card, write a child’s name and the date. These cards are the place for writing notes about each student in the classroom. This system can accommodate 25 students. You can adjust the number by adding or reducing the number of index cards in each folder. Daily, you carry the folder for that day with you as you move about the classroom, put the date on each card, and make notes on the children whose names are in the folder. Once the cards are filled with notes, transfer them to a portfolio for each child or file box.

- **Stick-to-It Notes.** Keep a pad of notes on a clipboard as you circulate the room. Make notes on the sticky notes, including the child’s name and date. Stick them to your clipboard, to be transferred later to the child’s folder. (This can also be done with blank address labels.) Set up a plan to observe five students each day. Keep a class list on the clipboard and make a checkmark next to each child that you observe that day.
Stop and watch your students as readers. Calkins advises us to observe with specificity, and to watch for the kinds of reading behaviors and attitudes that they exhibit. When you “pull alongside” a child, and watch very closely, you will discover some fascinating things about how children construct meaning, process print, and make choices (2001, p. 101). See Figure 4.2 for a list of behaviors to observe.

**Interest Inventories**

Mathewson says that reading interest is “favorable attitude with high action readiness” (2004, p. 1,444). For example, a child who regularly and voluntarily reads many biographies about sports personalities could be said to have “high action readiness,” because he acts upon that interest in sports by reading. However, this does not mean that all children who are interested in sports will be readers of sports biographies, due to their possible lack of reading ability or maturity. It also does not mean that the child who spends a week or two reading such biographies is doing this because of interest; instead, the student might be preparing for a required school research report.

Researchers tell us that interest can have an affect on children’s reading. Shirey and Reynolds (1988) found that children spent more time on reading interesting sentences and learned them better. Mathewson determined that “interesting reading done on an ongoing basis breaks down barriers to initiating reading activity and forms desirable habits” (2004, p. 1,456).

To capitalize on interests, find out first what your students like. Use an interest inventory to determine what interests them, and stock your classroom library with titles that reflect these interests. Interest inventories can help you select books for your students, plan themes, and form literature circles. Knowing your students’ interests can help you encourage voluntary reading, and guide them in experiencing the joy of reading. When this happens, as Rosenblatt explains, they have an aesthetic stance (1978). A stance is the manner in which a reader approaches a piece of text, or the way in which the reader mentally prepares to read. Readers who look at reading with an aesthetic stance are expecting enjoyment, personal connections, and meaningful encounters. Rosenblatt suggests that our aim when teaching our students to read should be the development of an aesthetic stance.

Many (2004) reports that readers’ stance can affect their understanding of text. If they are encouraged to look at literature from personal perspectives, or affective views, they will have greater comprehension. Conversely, teaching practices that focus on answering efferent-type questions narrow the experience that children have with literature. “When teachers use Ping-Pong questioning techniques, where students parrot back responses to questions listed in the teacher’s manual, students may assume the only appropriate focus when reading literature is to analyze the selection and retain important information.” Instead, “inviting students to fully relive the literary experience could lead them to greater heights of understanding” (p. 926).

It is helpful to fill your classroom library with books and other printed material that match the interests of your students. For example, suppose you find out that several members of your class play on sports teams. Sports fiction books (such as those written by Matt Christopher), biographies about sports heroes, sports
Reading Behaviors to Observe

Look at the reader’s eyes:

- How does the reader move his or her eyes around the page?
- Does the reader search for clues in the pictures, charts, maps, or figures?
- Does the reader glance from one page to the next, searching for clues in the print and the pictures?
- Does the reader look around the room, searching for clues in the classroom environment?
- What signs of interest do you see?
- Does the reader point to words on the page?
- Does the student slide his or her finger across the line of print?
- Does the reader attempt to cover up portions of a word to figure out its parts?
- Does the reader mark pages, write down notes, mark difficult words?
- When the reader comes to a difficult or unknown word, what does he or she do?
- Resist the temptation to offer immediate assistance. What is the reader’s choice of strategies for decoding? For determining meaning?
- Does the reader stop when something does not make sense?
- Does the reader reread?
- Does the reader read ahead to figure out the unknown?

Writing Behaviors to Observe

- Does the writer use brainstorming tools or lists of ideas to generate writing?
- Does the writer prefer to generate his or her own ideas for writing?
- Does the writer need help selecting topics?
- How does the writer approach a writing assignment?
- Does the writer persist with revising and editing?
- Does the writer give up and “publish” work that is not yet finished?
- Does the writer collaborate with others about the writing?
- Is the writer open to suggestions and comments about the writing?
- Does the blank page inhibit the writer?
- Do the mechanics of writing and handwriting overwhelm the writer?

magazines, and newspapers would likely be popular reading material in your classroom library.

Knowledge gained from interest inventories can also help you interact with your students in meaningful and personal ways. For example, suppose your middle school students are reading *The Skin I’m In* (Flake, 1998). This book is not considered a sports story; the main character, Maleeka, does not play a sport.
However, she must make many important decisions about the friends she hangs around with, her relationship with her mother, and her behavior at school. When talking to your students about the book, you can ask them to relate the problems she has to the ones they might have. You can ask them to think about how the author might change the story. Because your students are interested in sports, talk about how playing on a sports team might have given Maleeka a different perspective on things. Thus, knowing your students’ interests enables you to choose materials for them, but it also helps you think about ways to make personal connections to the printed page.

Generally, the purpose of any interest inventory is to determine what students enjoy, what they care about, and what motivates them. Topics and questions in an interest inventory might include:

- What do you like to do in your spare time?
- What sports do you like?
- What kinds of books do you like?
- What television shows do you like?
- How much time do you spend reading at home?
- What do you like/dislike about reading?
- What do you like to do when you are with friends?
- What is your favorite time of year?
- What is your favorite school subject?
- Who do you most admire?
- Who is your favorite famous person?

Choose the ones that will be of most help to you. Then determine the manner in which you want to survey your students’ interests. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show some formats. The format you choose depends on the age level of your students and manner in which you want to record and store their responses. Some formats are questionnaires or surveys; others are artistic creations done by the students. Create your own interest inventory using the topics that you want to know about, combined with the format that will work best for you and your students.

**Attitude Surveys**

Why do some of your students love reading and others hate it? Knowing the answer to that question can make a real difference in your instruction and your impact on the children with whom you work. It is important to find out what motivates your readers, as well as the attitudes they have about the act of reading, because “the environment for reading instruction is optimum when students are enthusiastic about reading and have an I-can-do-it attitude” (Pearson, Roehler, Dole & Duffy, 1992, p. 181). Many times, you will find that some of your students do not like to read and avoid it as much as possible. This information is helpful, too, because you can include materials in your classroom that are of high interest, such as Dav Pilkey’s *Captain Underpants* series or Ricky Ricotta’s *Mighty Robot* series. Books such as these, while they are not necessarily high-quality literature, can give your reluctant readers some much needed practice with the printed word in easy-to-read and motivating formats. Young reluctant writers often enjoy writing silly stories of this nature, too.
Figure 4.3 Ways to survey student interests.

Ways to Survey Interests

Sentence Completions
Using this method, you will create “sentence starters,” and ask the students to complete the sentence by filling in the blanks. This format works best for children who are comfortable composing and spelling on their own. Examples of sentence completions are:

- I enjoy _________________.
- My favorite subject in school is _____________________.
- What I like to read most is _____________________.
- My favorite thing in the whole world is _____________________.
- When I have free time, I like to _____________________.
- The very best present anyone could give me is _____________________.

Teacher-Read Survey
This type of survey provides more support for children who are not proficient or confident writers, or for younger children. You will read the question, and then the child marks the appropriate face symbol, indicating his or her level of interest. Some prior discussion of the symbols will help. Shown below are some sample items.

1. How much do you like books about animals? 😊😊
2. How much do you like math? 😊😊

Open-Ended Questions or Prompts
When you choose some questions or writing prompts that have a wide possibility of answers, you may get rich and interesting responses, which provide you with a wealth of information for planning. This type of inventory works well for children who are comfortable with writing and are given sufficient time and space to write lengthy answers. Some examples of these questions are:

- Imagine you have three hours of free time after school. What would be the best way to spend this time?
- Tell about the best family vacation you ever had.
- Who is your favorite famous person? Why?
- What is your favorite section of the library?
- If you had $100 to spend on anything you wanted, what would you buy? Why?
Glyphs

A glyph is a chart that shows any type of information, using a picture legend (Bamberger & Hughes, 1995). Shown below are directions for a bookworm glyph, in which your students can portray their reading interests. The completed glyph (Figure 4.4) was designed and created by one of my students, Jodi Murray.

**Bookworm Legend—My Reading Interests**

Before you begin your glyph, read all directions first.

1. How much do you like to read?
   - *Not very much*—Color your bookworm’s body one color.
   - *A little bit*—Color your bookworm’s body two colors.
   - *Very much*—Color your bookworm’s body two colors and add some polka dots.

2. What is your favorite type of book?
   - *Mystery*—Draw glasses on your bookworm.
   - *Adventure*—Add a cowboy hat to your bookworm.
   - *Science fiction*—Draw antennae on your bookworm.
   - *Other*—Add a top hat to your bookworm, then write your favorite type of book on the back.

3. Do you have a favorite author? Who is it? Write the author’s name along the tail of your bookworm.

4. What is the title of one of your favorite books? Write the title on the cover of your bookworm’s book.

5. What is one of your favorite things to do?
   - *Play sports*—Color the shoes purple.
   - *Watch TV*—Color the shoes orange.
   - *Artwork*—Color the shoes red.
   - *Listen to music*—Color the shoes green.
   - *Other*—Color the shoes blue, and write your favorite thing to do on the back of the bookworm.

6. How do you feel when your teacher asks you to read?
   - *Good*—Draw on the bookworm.
   - *Uncomfortable*—Draw on the bookworm.
   - *Awful*—Draw on the bookworm.

7. If you could have three wishes, what would they be? Write your three wishes on the thought cloud. Please put your name on the back of the bookworm when you are finished.
Wishes
1. To be a millionaire
2. To live in Hawaii
3. To meet Blink 182

Figure 4.4 Example of a bookworm glyph that depicts a student’s interests.
In order to foster an environment that generates enthusiasm, Mathewson discusses the need for linking “students’ previously held values, goals, and self-concepts to reading” (2004, p. 1455). In other words, you’ll want to know your students’ responses to two questions as they relate to the act of reading: “Can I do this?” and “Is it worth my efforts?”

There are several ways to determine your students’ attitudes toward reading and writing. Let’s take a look at some attitude surveys that can help you do this.

**Elementary Reading Attitude Survey**
McKenna and Kear (1990) created a survey that uses the popular Garfield cartoon character. The questions ask the students to tell how they react to a number of reading activities, in and out of school. When you give this survey to your students, you can obtain estimates of your students’ attitudes toward two types of reading—recreational and academic. Individual scores will enable you to complete a picture of each of your students, and class averages will provide you with a profile of the entire group. Both kinds of information will help you plan instruction as well as provide classroom materials that are most conducive to keeping your students motivated to read.

Using the survey, you can ask your students to read a question that relates to how they feel about reading. (You can read the survey to younger students.) For example, one question reads: “How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?” Another one asks, “How do you feel about getting a book for a present?” (McKenna & Kear, 1990, p. 630). Four pictures of the cartoon character Garfield are shown next to each question. These cartoons represent moods ranging from elation to anger, and students choose the picture that best represents how they would respond to the question. A copy of the complete survey of reading attitudes, available for use by teachers, is in the May 1990 edition of *The Reading Teacher*.

**Writing Attitude Survey**
More recently, a similar survey was created for the measurement of writing attitudes (Kear, Coffman, McKenna & Ambrosio, 2000). Garfield once again provides the stimulus for students to respond to questions, on a Likert scale, that ask them about how they feel about writing. Some questions ask students about types of writing, such as, “How would you feel writing to someone to change their opinion?” (p. 17). Other questions pertain to the writing process, such as “How would you feel if your teacher asked you to go back and change some of your writing?” (p. 20). The instrument can be used with any grade level; the teacher can read the items to the students in primary grades. A complete copy of the survey and its estimates of reliability and validity are in the September 2000 edition of *The Reading Teacher*.

**Reader Self-Perception Scale**
Building upon the same idea with older readers, Henk and Melnick created the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) to “measure how intermediate-level children feel about themselves as readers” (1995, p. 471). The scale is based on the “self-efficacy” idea, which is a “person’s judgments of her or his ability to perform an
activity, and the effect this perception has on the ongoing and future conduct of the activity” (p. 471). Designed for children above fourth grade, the scale measures four different factors related to reading self-perception: progress, observational comparison, social feedback, and physiological states. Students are asked to read each of the 33 items and rate their agreement with statements such as “I think I am a good reader” and “I understand what I read as well as other kids do.” The teacher can compare the students’ scores in each area with the norms established by the researchers, and determine if their self-perceptions are in the normal range. Performance of whole groups can also be examined, so that the teacher can modify classroom practices and materials as needed. The scale in its entirety, along with directions for administration and scoring, is available in the March 1995 edition of *The Reading Teacher*.

**Writer Self-Perception Scale**

The idea of self-efficacy is also the basis of the Writer Self-Perception Scale, or WSPS (Bottomley, Henk & Melnick, 1997–1998), which is designed in the same manner as the Reader Self-Perception Scale. The authors contend that “individuals who hold positive writer self-perceptions will probably pursue opportunities to write, expend more effort during writing engagements, and demonstrate greater persistence in seeking writing competence” (p. 287), and this assessment tool makes it simple for you to determine your students’ perceptions of themselves as writers. This scale consists of 38 items and is appropriate for upper elementary or middle school grades. It is available in the December 1997/January 1998 edition of *The Reading Teacher*.

**Motivation to Read Profile**

Students’ self-concepts as readers, along with their perceptions of the value of reading, are measured in the Motivation to Read Profile, or the MRP (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling & Mazzoni, 1996). This team of researchers recognized the need for teachers to assess both of these factors as they get to know their students’ reading lives.

There are two parts to the profile: the reading survey and the conversational interview. The survey, which consists of 20 items that are read aloud to the group by the teacher, is designed to assess readers’ self-concept, measuring how well they perceive their own competence as well as how they compare it to that of their peers. Additionally, the survey elicits information about the value students place on reading, usually in terms of how often they engage in reading behaviors and activities. The conversational interview consists of three sections, gathering information about the student’s reading of fiction and nonfiction as well as information about general reading behaviors. The interview is unique in that it is given individually and can “glean information that might otherwise be missed or omitted in a more formal, standardized interview approach” (Gambrell et al, 1996, p. 525). Individual information can lead to instructional plans such as suggesting certain books to children or providing additional support in small groups. Class averages can help the teacher to determine overall motivation of her students at different points in the school year, which may lead to modified plans, changes in materials, or implementation of home programs.

Some of the questions asked in this profile are shown in Figure 4.5.
Reading Survey
My friends think I am ______.
   ______ a very good reader
   ______ a good reader
   ______ an OK reader
   ______ a poor reader

When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I ______.
   ______ can never think of an answer
   ______ have trouble thinking of an answer
   ______ sometimes think of an answer
   ______ always think of an answer

Conversational Interview
Tell me about the most interesting story or book you have read this week.
Think about something important that you learned recently . . . from a book. What did you read about?

Cognitive Factors

What was your answer to the question in the Personal Reflection, “What do you need to know about your students before you begin to teach them about literacy?” Did you think about gathering information about your students’ abilities to recognize letters and sounds, read aloud, pronounce words, retell what they’ve read, spell correctly, or write clearly? These are abilities that are reflective of cognitive factors related to literacy.

As Calkins said so eloquently, “Respect the intelligence in your students’ efforts” (2001, p. 9). Remember the story about Christopher, who threw his book in frustration because the word he was trying to pronounce did not make sense? That incident is an example of a child’s attempt to construct meaning as he reads. Although the effort failed momentarily, Christopher was clearly able to do the things that readers are supposed to do. Many mental abilities are involved in the act of reading, and the child’s capacity for mustering up all of them simultaneously and smoothly results in his reading strength.

I mentioned before the importance of considering the glass as half full when assessing your students’ reading abilities. This is sometimes hard to do, especially
Cognitive Factors

when needs are so great that they seem to overwhelm the child’s strengths. A few years ago, in my graduate-level reading course, most of my students were practicing teachers. One, in particular, was a highly respected teacher who had been teaching in the primary grades at a local elementary school for several years. She was returning to the university to earn her master’s degree in reading. A requirement of the course was to work in our reading clinic with a child whose parents brought him to the clinic because he was having difficulty learning to read. I assigned a second grade boy to this teacher to work with in the clinic, because of her work with children in primary grades. After about a week, she came to see me, and said with frustration that she really did not think she would be able to work with the boy, and wondered if I would consider assigning another student to her. I was quite surprised, and wondered if she was having difficulty managing his behavior or if he was not able to stay focused.

“No, it’s not that,” she said. “It’s just that . . . well . . . he’s just too low! He can’t read!”

I assured her that this was the very reason the child was in a university reading clinic, and that, no matter how “low” he was, she would be able to teach him how to read. And she did!

Sometimes, we have expectations of the way our students should be when they walk into our classrooms. An engagement perspective of assessments helps us to see students in terms of the things they can do over a period of time, which in turn helps us make plans, determine starting points, and specify needs.

Cognitive factors are the mental skills needed to complete the acts of literacy. In order for literacy to be complete, with understanding of print or an articulate written message as the end result, all of these abilities need to be present and working together. What kinds of cognitive abilities are involved in literacy? There are several abilities needed to read and write print. The questions to ask about your students are:

1. How well can the beginning reader manipulate sounds of the language?
2. How well does the beginning reader know the mechanics of print?
3. How well can the student decode unknown words?
4. How well can the student comprehend?
5. How well does the student monitor his own understanding as he reads?
6. How well does the student express his thoughts in writing?

The answers to these questions will help you get a clear picture of your readers, no matter which grade you teach. We’ll look at each of these areas of assessment separately.

Assessing Phonemic Awareness

Young children need some understandings about how our language works. Phonemic awareness, which you will learn more about in Chapter 6, is the awareness that young children have about the sounds of language. They instinctively know that spoken words signify meaning, but they also know that words can be manipulated so that additional words result. Phonemic awareness is “an insight
about speech itself” (Graves, Juel & Graves, 2001, p. 99). For example, a child who is phonemically aware knows that the word “hat” can be changed to become the word “cat” or even the word “has.” This child may also know that “hat” sounds very much like “fat” and “sat” and “bat” and “flat.” All of these understandings are important prerequisites to the understanding of letter–sound relationships, which is one of the essential skills used when figuring out unknown words. Listening to and repeating nursery rhymes, nonsense verse, and silly songs delight many children. They often like to play with the language and create rhymes or songs of their own. This is evidence that they are beginning to develop phonemic awareness.

You can cultivate additional evidence of phonemic awareness with the use of a simple informal assessment, called the Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation (Yopp, 1995). This assessment consists of a list of 22 words. The teacher says each word, and asks the child to repeat the word in segments, so that it is broken into each of its phonemes. For example, if the teacher says, “dog,” the child must say, “duh,” “ah,” “guh,” indicating the three sounds in the word “dog,” which are /d/, /o/, /g/. The teacher uses his own judgment about the need for instruction in this area, based on the number of correct responses given by the child. Figure 4.6 shows the Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation.

Assessing Concepts of Print

Marie Clay, in *Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control* (1991), describes what happens when the teacher of very young children does not make clear what she means when she uses words that are associated with print:

Suppose a teacher has placed an attractive picture on the wall and has asked her children for a story which she will record under it. They offer the text “Mother is cooking” which the teacher alters slightly to introduce some features she wishes to teach. She writes,

Mother said,
“*I am baking.*”

If the teacher then says, “Now look at our story,” 30 percent of her new entrant class will attend to the picture. (p. 141)

When learning to read, the very young need to learn some concepts of things that experienced readers take for granted. Print concepts, such as “letter,” “word,” “sound,” “sentence,” “writing,” and “picture” need to be pointed out and defined. **Concepts of print** include all of the terms and entities of print that a reader needs to successfully sort out the connections between speech and written language. Additionally, these terms need to be familiar and recognizable so that the child can talk to others about the acts of reading and writing. Harris and Hodges define “print concept development” as “in emergent literacy, the growing recognition that print needs to be arranged in an orderly way to communicate information in reading and writing” (1995, p. 194).

There are several ways to measure your young students’ concepts of print. I’ll describe them in the next few sections.
Figure 4.6 The Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation

Student’s name ______________________ Date ________
Score (number correct) ___________

Directions: Today we’re going to play a word game. I’m going to say a word and I want you to break the word apart. You are going to tell me each sound in the word in order. For example, if I say “old,” you should say /o/-/l/-/d/.” (Administrator: Be sure to say the sounds, not the letters, in the word.) Let’s try a few together

Practice items: (Assist the child in segmenting these items as necessary.)
ride, go, man

Test items: (Circle those items that the student correctly segments; incorrect responses may be recorded on the blank line following the item.)

1. dog _______________ 12. lay _______________
2. keep _______________ 13. race _______________
3. fine _______________ 14. zoo _______________
4. no _______________ 15. three _______________
5. she _______________ 16. job _______________
6. wave _______________ 17. in _______________
7. grew _______________ 18. ice _______________
8. that _______________ 19. at _______________
9. red _______________ 20. top _______________
10. me _______________ 21. by _______________
11. sat _______________ 22. do _______________

Graves, Juel, and Burns Emergent Literacy Assessment

A young reader, in order to be successful at reading, needs to have alphabet knowledge, as well as an understanding of what happens when letters come together. Graves, Juel, and Burns (2001) developed an emergent literacy assessment that can help you determine the youngster’s ability to differentiate words. In this assessment tool, the teacher shows the child a picture and its accompanying sentence: “He can run.” The teacher reads the sentence aloud while pointing to the picture. Then, the teacher says one of the words in the sentence, and asks the child to repeat it verbally. After that, the student must write the word on a space provided in the test, writing as many letters as he or she can figure out, based on knowledge of letter–sound correspondences. Points are given for each part of the word that the child can reproduce verbally and in writing. Another feature of the test asks the student to point to each word in the sentence as he reads. This helps the teacher determine the student’s ability to match spoken words to their printed equivalents—an indication of the concept of word. The test in its entirety, in addition to other useful classroom assessment tools, is available in *Rubrics and Other Tools for Classroom Assessment for Teaching Reading in the 21st Century* (Graves, Juel & Burns, 2001). Morris (cited in Tyner, 2004) offers a similar assessment tool, in which students finger-point as they recite the words on the page of a four-page book.

Clay’s Concepts About Print Test

Marie Clay’s Concepts About Print test (1993) can help you determine what the child knows about the mechanics of reading, such as moving the eyes from left to right, and differentiating between words. The child is given one of two available books, each of which has errors intentionally placed throughout. These books, titled *Stones* (Clay, 1979) and *Sand* (Clay, 1972), contain pictures and words that are upside down, letters in words that are backwards, and words in a sentence that are in the wrong order. The teacher asks the child to help her read the book. While the child interacts with the book, the teacher checks to see whether he or she notices any of the errors. Questions to ask and record sheets for recording information are in Clay’s *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (1993). The two children’s books needed for completing the assessment must be obtained separately.

Checklist for Observing Young Children

Figure 4.7 shows a checklist that can be used when observing a young child as she “reads” a book. The checklist is a simple way to determine what a child knows about books. It can be used as soon as you notice that a youngster shows interest in reading, such as when she picks up a book and pretends to read, or listens attentively as you read to her. The age at which this begins varies according to the child, but generally, the checklist can be used with children as young as three years old. Note that the directions indicate that you are to ask the child to choose a book and “share it” with you. The reason for this wording is that some children are acutely aware of the fact that they cannot yet decode individual words phonetically. When asked to read a book, they will point out that they cannot, and may refuse to try. Thus, if you ask the child to simply share the book with you, you may get a more enthusiastic response. This checklist can be used over a period of time to chart growth in reading awareness.
**Cognitive Factors**

**Checklist for Observing Young Children**

**Directions:** Ask the child to choose a book and say, “Please share this book with me.” Record his or her behaviors as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Awareness Description</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The child demonstrates understanding that a book holds meaning.</td>
<td>11. The child matches individually spoken words with the individual written words in the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The child treats a book differently from the way he treats another object, such as a toy.</td>
<td>12. The child’s verbal story or retelling matches the written text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The child holds the book right side up.</td>
<td>13. The child uses “book language” to tell or read the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The child turns to the beginning of the book.</td>
<td>14. The child phonetically decodes words: most some none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The child begins sharing a book on the first page.</td>
<td>15. The child can, when asked, point to individual words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The child moves from left to right through the book.</td>
<td>16. The child can, when asked, point to the beginning of a word on the page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The child moves from left to right on the page.</td>
<td>17. The child can, when asked, point to the end of a word on the page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The child moves across the page and down to the left, moving down the page.</td>
<td>18. The child can, when asked, point to the middle of a word on the page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The child “keeps place” with his finger or some other method of marking.</td>
<td>19. The child can, when asked, point to the beginning of a sentence on the page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The child uses pictures to read or tell the text.</td>
<td>20. The child can, when asked, point to the end of a sentence on the page.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.7** A reading awareness checklist to use with beginning readers.
Alphabet Recognition Checklists

Of course, beginning readers must also recognize the letters of the alphabet. The interesting thing about alphabet knowledge is that a youngster does not actually need to know the names of the letters in our English alphabet in order to read. Conceivably, a child could see the written word “hat,” and say its verbal equivalent. To accomplish this task, whether by phonetically decoding or through instant recognition, the child would not need to be able to tell you that the first written symbol in this word is the letter “h.” As long as he or she can make the sound represented by this little scribble on the page, it would seem that it doesn’t matter whether the child can say “aitch” when you point to the “h” and ask him or her to identify it. However, in order for children to be able to converse with others—namely, their teachers, their parents, and their peers—about the mechanics of reading, they must know what names to call all of these written symbols on the page. It is most helpful for a five-year-old to know which one of the symbols in the word “hat” is the “h.”

Thus, an alphabet recognition checklist is helpful. Several are available (Clay, 1993; Graves, Juel & Burns, 2001; Morris, cited in Tyner, 2004; Shanker & Eckwall, 2000), and they all ask children to name the letter that is written and shown to them. Figure 4.8 shows directions for an alphabet checklist checklist. Figure 4.9 shows part of a record sheet, as well as two different sets of student pages, printed in different fonts. Some teachers find it useful to assess a child’s ability to recognize the alphabet as it is printed in different type faces, because certain letters, such as the “a” and the “g,” are reproduced differently, depending on the font. Sometimes children become confused with the differences in appearance of these letters.

Also notice that the assessment contains two components: naming and writing. You can use this checklist to record how well the child can verbally name letters of the alphabet, as well as how well he can reproduce the letters in writing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child's Name</th>
<th>Names the Letter</th>
<th>Writes the Letter</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uppercase</td>
<td>Lowercase</td>
<td>Uppercase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uppercase</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lowercase</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Uppercase Alphabet Recognition Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>K</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Lowercase Alphabet Recognition Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>w</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>s</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>k</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.9** Student recognition sheet.
Assessing Decoding Abilities

Decoding means to “use symbols to interpret a unit that bears meaning” (Beck & Juel, 1992, p. 104). Knowing how to decode unfamiliar words is a vitally important skill for the reader, because this allows children the independence and opportunity to read more widely than children who cannot decode well. Decoding skills lead to automaticity, which, as you learned in Chapter 1, is when the reader knows a word instantly and does not need to think about its construction. Children need to know that letters correspond to sounds in spoken words (Beck & Juel, 1992), and that letters have a relationship with the sounds in printed words (Adams, 1990). There are many formal tests available for determining decoding ability; however, many of them test simple letter–sound correspondence, using pictures. It is important to keep in mind the reason for assessing decoding skills, which is to determine how well children can decode words that are not known. Pictures do not allow for this; nor do familiar words. If a test asks students to decode the word “house,” which is already in their reading vocabularies, the test is not assessing their abilities to figure out a word by using what they know about letters and sounds (Shanker & Ekwall, 2000).

Thus, assessments that are most useful for determining your students’ true decoding abilities fit the following criteria:

1. Unfamiliar or nonsense words are used; students are asked to read them aloud.
2. Assessment is done individually and privately.
3. Students are asked to show their ability to blend and segment phonemes in a written word or nonsense word.

Names Test

The Names Test (Cunningham, 2005, p. 176) is one such assessment that fits these criteria. Students are shown a list of first and last names that include common phonetic elements. They are asked to read the list of names as if they were taking roll in a classroom. The teacher writes the phonetic spelling for each name that is mispronounced, which offers some idea of the types of phonetic elements that give the student trouble. For example, if a child cannot pronounce the name “Grace,” the teacher can conclude that the child might not be familiar with the “gr” blend, or with the “CVCe” phonics generalization. Common patterns can be determined, and instruction planned accordingly.

One disadvantage of using this test is that some names might be familiar to the students, which defeats its purpose. Additionally, the authors could not find names for some common syllables such as “-ion,” which limits its usefulness. Another disadvantage, acknowledged by the authors, is the fact that children of diverse backgrounds may find the test difficult because of its lack of ethnic names. The list of names used in this test, available in Cunningham’s Phonics They Use: Words for Reading and Writing (2005), is shown in Figure 4.10.

El Paso Phonics Survey

The El Paso Phonics Survey (Shanker & Ekwall, 2000) is another assessment that requires students to read unfamiliar words; however, this test uses nonsense words. It is based on the assumption that words consist of two parts—onsets and
rimes. An onset is the first phoneme of a word, such as the “b” in “bat,” or the “ch” in “chill.” A rime is the remainder of the word, or the part that makes it a member of a word family. In my examples, the rime in “bat” is “-at,” and the rime in “chill” is “-ill.” In the El Paso Phonics Survey, there are 58 nonsense words that begin with consonant units, and all are comprised of the rimes “in,” “up,” and “am.” The student is shown the word that is broken into two parts, and asked to say the first letter, then pronounce the rime, and finally, say the resulting nonsense word that is made when the letters are blended together. For example, one item appears as this:

\[ n \quad \text{up} \quad \text{nup} \]

The child is expected to say, “n,” “up,” “nup.”

Knowledge of vowel phonemes is also assessed, and the items are used in a similar fashion. The child is asked to say the vowel letter or letters first, then the nonsense word in which the vowel phoneme is heard. For example, one of these items looks like this:

\[ ð \quad \text{sot} \]

The child is expected to say, “short ð,” “sot.”

Extensive directions and a recording sheet are included in the *Ekwall/Shanker Reading Inventory* (2000).

**Classroom Decoding Checks**

You can create your own simple classroom assessments. One excellent teacher, Nancy Steider, who teaches first grade in Pennsylvania, creates a ten-item assessment every nine weeks (N. Steider, personal communication, March 12, 2002). She makes a list of nonsense words, using onsets that she knows her students have learned, and rimes that she knows are part of their sight vocabulary. She asks them...
Teachers can use running records to discover much about the reading processes of their students.

to pronounce the onset first, then the rime, then the entire word. This is a true decoding assessment, because the nonsense words are unfamiliar, yet they contain phonemes that she knows her students have been taught. The assessment for each child takes about a minute. Figure 4.11 shows an example of one of Steider’s decoding checks.

Assessing Comprehension

A reader’s ability to say the words on the page is just one part of reading. The ability to translate those words to meaning is the remainder of the act of reading, and is the key to success as a reader. Decoding assessments show only half of the picture; in addition, you’ll need to assess how well the reader can recognize and understand vocabulary, as well as understand the explicit and implicit messages of the text. I will introduce and discuss three useful assessment tools that can help you do this: running records, miscue analysis, and retelling analysis.

Running Records

It makes sense that the best way to determine how well a student can read is to ask him or her to read. A very powerful assessment tool called the running record accomplishes this. Marie Clay designed this assessment tool to be used by the classroom teacher. “The prime purpose of a Running Record is to understand more about how children are using what they know to get to the messages of the text, or in other words, what reading processes they are using” (2000, p. 8). It is designed to assess text difficulty for the student, as well as to give the teacher information about oral reading behaviors, which aids in making instructional decisions. You can determine how well the student recognizes words instantly, as
well as how the student figures out words he or she does not know. Ideally, the running record can be done with any text selection, at any time, with any student who can attempt to read out loud. It is administered on a one-to-one basis with the student, and once you are comfortable with the notations of the record, you can complete it in five to ten minutes. A sample assessment is shown in Appendix B. Directions and scoring sheets are provided in the Toolkit booklet.

**Miscue Analysis**

Based on the oral reading that you record, you can determine trends and consistencies in the student’s reading behavior by analyzing her miscues in an assessment called the **miscue analysis**. A **miscue** is anything the student says that is different from what is printed on the page. When you analyze what a student says when reading out loud, comparing it to what is written on the page, you obtain a qualitative analysis, which often reveals that the student is extracting meaning from the page, despite word recognition errors. This analysis helps you become aware of the language functioning of a student who speaks a variation of English or is learning to speak and read English at the same time. You also find out the strength of the student’s reading strategies. The idea of miscue analysis came to us from Yetta and Kenneth Goodman more than 25 years ago. Recently, they said that readers’ mistakes reveal much more about readers’ capabilities than their incapabilities, and that “miscues are the windows on language processes at work” (2004, p. 638).

**Classroom Decoding Check**

**Directions:** Ask the child to say the first sound in each of these nonsense words, then the second sound, then the entire blended word. For example, for the nonsense word “drass,” the child would say, “duh . . . ah . . . s—s—s— . . . drass.” On the spaces provided, write the pronunciation that the child makes.

**Phonetic elements:**

- **Digraphs:** qu, ch, tch, th
- **Final consonants:** ss, b, ff, f, m, p, ck, ll
- **Short vowels:** a, e, i, o, u
- **r-blends:** br, cr, dr, fr, gr, pr, tr

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mog</td>
<td>druck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chib</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thuss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fetch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quoll</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cognitive Factors**

Objective
After reading *The Skirt* (Soto, 1992), the student will retell its story elements and assess his or her own ability to describe each element.

Preparation
On index cards, write each of the story elements, one per card: setting, characters, problem, events, and resolution. Prepare a story-retelling checklist like the one shown below.

Materials
- Items related to Mexican dancing: musical instruments, articles of clothing, photographs
- Retell checklist for each student
- Drawing supplies

Introduction
1. Meet with the student individually.
2. Prepare to read *The Skirt* by talking about the title and cover picture. Activate prior knowledge about Mexican dances and the colorful skirts women dancers wear. If possible, encourage the student to talk about any personal experiences. Show and talk about some of the items related to Mexican dances, such as articles of clothing, musical instruments, or photographs.
3. Ask the student to make predictions about the story and write them down on a chart.
4. Show the student a retelling checklist, similar to the one shown below. Remind the student to look for the elements as he or she reads.

### Story Retelling Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>I know the setting of the story.</th>
<th>During Reading</th>
<th>After Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>I know the most important character in the story.</td>
<td>During Reading</td>
<td>After Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know the other characters in the story.</td>
<td>During Reading</td>
<td>After Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>I know the problem in the story.</td>
<td>During Reading</td>
<td>After Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>I know how the character tries to solve the problem.</td>
<td>During Reading</td>
<td>After Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>I know how the problem was solved.</td>
<td>During Reading</td>
<td>After Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I Think</td>
<td>I can think about this story and tell others what I think.</td>
<td>During Reading</td>
<td>After Reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modifications for ELL are printed in color.
Guided Reading

5. Read the story, stopping at appropriate places to talk about the elements. Refer to the retelling checklist and check off the elements in the “During Reading” box, as she finds them and verbalizes them.

6. As each element is found, give the student an index card. Write the name of the element on the front of the card. On the back, ask the student to draw the element. For example, the character card will look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>Picture of Miata and Ana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After Reading

7. Putting the retelling checklist out as a reminder, ask the student to retell the story, using the sequence of elements on the checklist. If necessary, pull out the pictured story structure cards that the student created, to help him or her recall important parts of the story. Check off the “After Reading” portions of the checklist.

8. Talk with the student about the retelling, and put the retelling checklist and cards in the student’s portfolio. If the student had difficulty remembering the elements, use sticky notes the next time he or she reads a book. Mark the pages with each of these elements and ask the student to refer back to the book as necessary while retelling.

The analysis is based on the student’s use of cueing systems. As you learned in Chapter 1, readers use the four cueing systems to figure out meaning from the print on the page. The reader determines meaning based on graphophonological, syntactical, semantic, and pragmatic cues. By completing the miscue analysis, you can determine which of these cues is most supporting the reader.

To see what miscue analysis can do for you, look at this sentence, taken from Marc Brown’s *Arthur’s Family Vacation* (1993). Let’s imagine that you ask a student, Tanya, to read a portion of this book for a running record. One sentence in the book reads:

“For the next few days, it rained and rained, but Arthur didn’t mind.”

Tanya reads the sentence aloud, and says this:

“For the next four days, it rained and rained, but Arthur didn’t mind.”

Miscue analysis tells you that Tanya is getting some clues from all of the cueing systems. Her miscue is the word “four,” which she says instead of the word “few.” Semantic cues indicate to her that the word must be one that connotes a number and describes the word “days,” and she uses a word that does just that. Graphophonological cues tell her that the word she must say begins with the letter “f,” and she obviously knows the sound represented by that letter. The remaining letters in the word, however, she ignores. Thus, Tanya’s miscue indicates to us that she is deriving meaning from the page, and has used a miscue that probably will not inhibit her understanding of the print. The word “four” makes sense in this context.
sentence, and will most likely not have a negative affect on her comprehension of the whole story.

Let’s look at another student’s miscue. Mitchell reads the sentence this way:

“For the new days, it ran and ran, but Arthur didn’t mind.”

Mitchell’s miscues reveal much about his use of clues from the page as he reads. The words “next” and “few” seem to run together for him; thus producing the word “new.” He pronounced the word “rained” as “ran,” which is visually similar to the word “rained.” Thus, Mitchell seems to be relying on graphophonological cues. These miscues will probably affect his comprehension, because while they are visually similar, they are not semantically similar to the words that the author uses.

Other types of miscues reveal important information about the reader. For example, when a reader makes a miscue, pauses, and then corrects him- or herself, this is called a self-correction. Use of a self-correction indicates something you hope all students are doing—deriving meaning from the page. Suppose Mitchell had stopped himself after saying the word “ran,” and corrected himself, saying, “rained.” This step would indicate that he was asking himself as he read, “Does this make sense?” His self-monitoring ability would be evident, which is an important strategy for readers to cultivate.

**Retelling Analysis**

Apart from assessing the child’s accuracy with words, you need to know how well he understands what he reads. A retelling analysis is a “viable alternative to teacher follow-up questions” (Routman, 1991, p. 323) that allows the student to tell what he remembers from his reading. I prefer retellings to teacher questioning as an informal assessment, because the child guides this assessment. You can truly determine what the child remembers from the reading, as well as the ability to sequence the details, and the ability to include all the story elements or main ideas of the text. After the child reads aloud, ask him or her to retell the story or the text, as if telling it to someone who has never before read the book. As he or she retells, record all of the remembered details and then prompt for more, if necessary.

Some children are uncomfortable with retelling because they are accustomed to answering teacher-directed questions, and are unsure of what to do when they must generate thoughts about the text on their own. That makes retelling even more important for them, because they are “in charge of telling in their own words what they have understood” (Routman, 1991, p. 323). This technique helps them develop confidence and autonomy as readers who think about their own reading. Retelling is proactive, not reactive, in that children are told before reading that they will be asked to retell the story. Thus, they can begin thinking about the text before they read, rather than waiting until after reading and reacting to the teacher’s questions. Hoyt (1999) offers some excellent suggestions for using retelling analysis. Additionally, the Toolkit provides two checklists for retelling analysis.

**Matching Readers to Texts**

One of the most important things you will do is help your students find books that fit their abilities and interests. A running record will reveal the student’s word recognition ability, which is the number of words pronounced just as they
are printed on the page. This number, called the word recognition rate, is helpful in determining a comfortable reading level for the child. To help you understand the concept of reading levels, let’s look at three kinds of reading materials: independent, instructional, and frustrational. Each of these levels is summarized in Figure 4.12.

When your student can pick up a book, read it fluently, understand it, and personally react to it, without help, the book is at the “independent level” for that student. Generally, this means that he or she can recognize about 95% or more of the words in the text; however, an important consideration is the student’s interest. In order for the text to be one that the child can truly read independently, the child needs to be engaged as he or she reads it. The child needs to be interested enough in the book to react personally to it. Most of the time, students choose this book on their own. He can say of this book, “I can—and I want to—read this text by myself.”

Books that are just a little bit too hard to tackle alone fall in the instructional level. These are books in which your students can read about 90% to 94% of the words with no help. These books would not be ideal for reading independently. Instead, they would be the ones that you use in teaching lessons about

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Difficulty Level</th>
<th>95% or higher word recognition accuracy, and the retelling:</th>
<th>90%–94% word recognition accuracy, and the retelling:</th>
<th>Below 90% word recognition accuracy, and the retelling:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Level</strong></td>
<td>● was full and detailed. ● was mostly unassisted. ● was correct. ● included personal connections or reflections.</td>
<td>● was partial, but satisfactory. ● needed to be prompted for about half of the details. ● was accurate after questioning or prompting. ● was not independently done; the child needed guidance.</td>
<td>● was fragmented. ● was confusing. ● was incomplete; important details were missing. ● was indicative of misunderstanding or difficulty with the selection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Level</strong></td>
<td>“I can read this text with help.” This text is used in guided reading lessons.</td>
<td>“I can read this text with help.” This text is used in guided reading lessons.</td>
<td>“I can read this text with help.” This text is used in guided reading lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frustrational Level</strong></td>
<td>“This book is not for me right now.” This text would be more appropriate, depending on interest, for read-alouds by the teacher.</td>
<td>“This book is not for me right now.” This text would be more appropriate, depending on interest, for read-alouds by the teacher.</td>
<td>“This book is not for me right now.” This text would be more appropriate, depending on interest, for read-alouds by the teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reading. Typically, you choose these books for your students. Often, they are valuable for meeting certain objectives that you have. Or, they are simply good books that offer a good read, but with which your students will need some support. Your students can say of these books, “I can read this text with help.”

Books at the frustrational level are too hard for your students to decode. Attempting to read them alone would be a frustrating task—thus their label. Word recognition is below 90%. However, many times, these books are highly interesting to your students. Keep in mind that children need to listen to good books and to see a model of reading. So these are the books that you will need to read to your students. They can say of these books, “This book is one I can listen to right now. I can read it later.”

Sometimes it is quite easy to determine the difficulty level of a book. Many publishers tell you; all you have to do is look on the front or back cover and find a grade level. For example, HarperTrophy, a division of HarperCollins Publishers, publishes books under the label “An I Can Read Book,” and the grade level for which the book is most appropriate is printed on a top corner of the cover of the book. Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishers publishes the Bank Street Ready-to-Read series of books, which are categorized according to grade levels. Scholastic Books offers the “Hello Reader!” set of books, which show the age and grade that would most likely use them. Some Scholastic Book company books are printed with a label on the back cover of the book, on one of the bottom corners. The label “RL,” followed by a number, represents the “reading level” of the book, which is its approximate grade level. Random House also has sets of leveled books, and has had the label “I Can Read It All By Myself—Beginner Books” on its Dr. Seuss books (as well as others) for more than 40 years.

Grade levels of books are most often determined by the difficulty of the vocabulary in the book, as well as the difficulty of the sentence structure. Generally, shorter words and fewer sentences are easier to read. This is the premise of a formula for determining the readability of a book. There have been several readability formulas available over the years; one is the Fry Readability formula (Fry, 1977, 2002). It is a graph that determines the approximate grade level that matches the difficulty of the book, based on word length and number of sentences. The Fry Readability formula yields a grade level number based on the number of syllables and the number of sentences in passages of the text. When you compute the readability of a book, and derive a grade level, you can assume that it is approximately appropriate for an average reader who is in that grade in school. This formula and others like it are objective measures of readability, and do not account for more subjective measures such as the interests of your students or their motivation to read. Proper nouns, such as Anastasia, Encyclopedia Brown, or Benjamin Franklin, can increase the grade level score of your text, even though the content of the book might be of lower readability. Moreover, the Fry Readability formula does not work well for books for younger children, because it is based on an average of three 100-word counts. Most books for beginning readers do not have that many words. Thus, the formula is most useful for chapter books. See Figure 4.13 for the Fry Readability graph.

Crawford created a readability formula for Spanish text (Temple, Ogle, Crawford & Freppon, 2005, p. 530). This formula works on the same premise as the Fry Readability graph. The teacher counts the number of syllables and sentences in the first hundred words of the Spanish text, and determines the approximate grade level of the text.
DIRECTIONS: Randomly select 3 one hundred word passages from a book or an article. Plot average number of syllables and average number of sentences per 100 words on graph to determine the grade level of the material. Choose more passages per book if great variability is observed and conclude that the book has uneven readability. Few books will fall in gray area but when they do grade level scores are invalid.

Count proper nouns, numerals and initializations as words. Count a syllable for each symbol. For example, “1945” is 1 word and 4 syllables and “IRA” is 1 word and 3 syllables.

**EXAMPLE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYLLABLES</th>
<th>SENTENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Hundred Words</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Hundred Words</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Hundred Words</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AVERAGE**

141 6.3

READABILITY 7th GRADE (see dot plotted on graph)

**Figure 4.13** The Fry Readability graph.

Other ways of determining the suitability for books have been developed more recently. Published lists of leveled books are available, including two by Fountas and Pinnell: Matching Books to Readers: Using Leveled Books in Guided Reading K–3 (1999), and Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3–6 (2001). Fountas and Pinnell describe “hard texts,” “easy texts,” and “just right texts”; the latter is the type of text teachers need to use with students when instructing them (1999, pp. 2–3). These books are just a little too difficult to use independently, but can be read easily with support from the teacher. Fountas and Pinnell also describe five categories of readers: emergent, early, transitional, self-extending, and advanced. They explain how books are leveled according to their characteristics, so that each group of readers would be matched with books that are suitable for their needs and developmental stages. For example, books for early readers would have larger font size, a greater number of pictures, a simpler theme, and a simple narrative point of view. Characteristics that are considered are:

1. Length  9. Organization of narrative texts (fiction)
2. Print  10. Organization of expository texts (nonfiction)
3. Page layout  11. Perspective
4. Punctuation  12. Language structure
5. Illustrations  13. Literary language or devices
7. Themes  15. Number and range of words
8. Ideas

In both of the books mentioned earlier, Fountas and Pinnell list hundreds of books and their levels, and all of these characteristics are considered when leveling the books.

An excellent source that gives an honest appraisal and a practical explanation of leveling books is Calkins’s The Art of Teaching Reading, Chapter 7, “Teaching Readers Within a Leveled Classroom Library” (2001, pp. 119–135). Additionally, several web sites can help:

studentview.org/instruct-svcs/booklist/home.htm
registration.beavton.k12.or.us/lbdb/
www.pps.k12.or.us/curriculum/literacy/leveled_books/
www.geocities.com/teachingwithheart/levelbooks.html
www.pps.k12.or.us/instruction-c/literacy/leveled_books/
users.oasisol.com/daireme/book.htm
www.expage.com/page/kikiteachersleveledbooklinks
www.leveledbooks.com/booksearch.html

When you use the running record, you’ll select a book that, based on your best guess, is not too easy or too hard for this child, choose a passage of about 150 words, and complete the assessment. Once the student has finished reading, you can determine how well that piece of text “fits” him or her, as well as some valuable information about what he or she does to decode unknown words and monitor understanding. At that point, you can make instructional decisions. For example, let’s say that the child reads a selection that has a readability of about
second grade level. If the child can accurately read 95% of the words in that passage, clearly retell the passage in detail with personal meaning attached, and self-correct most of the word recognition errors, then the child is able to read second grade materials independently.

Another good way to match readers to texts is with an informal reading inventory. This assessment tool is commercially available. Some excellent ones are listed in Figure 4.14, including one that is a bilingual reading inventory for grades K–12. An inventory consists of a set of graded passages. The teacher determines the grade level that would be a comfortable place to begin, and asks the student to read the passage aloud. While the student reads, the teacher records errors. Afterwards, the teacher asks a few comprehension questions (usually four of them) about the passage. Based on the number of words recognized, as well as the number of correctly answered questions, the teacher determines the level at which the student would be most comfortable for instruction as well as for independent reading.

You can also make your own informal reading inventory (IRI) by selecting passages from graded basal reading anthologies and writing four comprehension questions for each. If you have Spanish-speaking students, you may want to create an IRI in Spanish. Crawford’s Readability formula for Spanish texts will be helpful for this (Temple, Ogle, Crawford & Freppon, 2005, p. 530).

One effective way to use the informal reading inventory is to determine the student’s listening capacity. In this assessment, the teacher selects the graded passage that corresponds to the student’s current grade level, reads it aloud to the student, and then asks the comprehension questions. Because children can comprehend what they listen to better than what they read, the listening capacity level gives you an idea of their capacity for comprehending text in English. Typically, students can comprehend a passage that is at their grade level or higher, even if they cannot read it.

Crawford (2004) suggests using the listening capacity level as a measure of “readiness” for English language learners. For example, suppose you have a third grade student who is learning English and can read in his native language. Read a third grade IRI passage to him, and ask four comprehension questions. If the student answers three of the four questions correctly, then he is ready to begin instruction in third grade reading materials in English.

English-Espanol Reading Inventory for the Classroom (Flynt & Cooter, 1999)
Informal Reading Inventory, Sixth Edition (Burns & Roe, 2002)
Qualitative Reading Inventory—3 Third Edition (Leslie & Caldwell, 2000)
The Stieglitz Informal Reading Inventory: Assessing Reading Behaviors from Emergent to Advanced Levels, Third Edition (Stieglitz, 2001)

Figure 4.14 Informal reading inventories.
Assessing Metacognition

Have you ever been reading a book—perhaps a textbook like this one—and suddenly stopped reading because you realized that you did not understand the words anymore? Perhaps you were doing what I call “reading without really reading,” or calling out the words to yourself, without fully understanding what the author was trying to say. If you caught yourself doing this and stopped in your tracks, then your metacognition was at work. **Metacognition** is the ability of students to monitor their own thinking while they read. It is important for you to know how well your students can monitor their own reading, because good readers are able to do this, and poor readers are not.

Observing your younger readers as they read is also important for determining metacognition abilities. You can make anecdotal notes about your students’ behaviors when they come to words they do not know, when they mispronounce words, or when they make several repetitions as they read. The running record is an excellent way to record students’ reading behaviors. The “self-correction rate” is indicative of the student’s ability to recognize his or her oral reading errors and correct them without help. Young children who are skilled at reading are far better at doing this than those who are struggling with reading (Paris, Lipson & Wixson, 1994). (See the **Toolkit** for further information.)

Think-Alouds

A strategy that is useful for determining metacognitive abilities is the student think-aloud. This strategy asks students to stop at certain places in the text and think out loud, saying what makes sense and what does not, as well as explaining the strategies that they use as they try to make sense of the text. According to Oster, “readers’ thoughts might include commenting on or questioning the text, bringing their prior knowledge to bear, or making inferences and predictions. These comments reveal readers’ weaknesses as well as their strengths as comprehenders and allow the teacher to assess their needs in order to plan more effective instruction” (2001, p. 64). To use this strategy as an assessment, first list the kinds of things that readers “should be thinking about all the time while reading” (p. 65), such as:

1. Information about characters or story that they think is important
2. Predictions about the characters’ actions or the story
3. Questions they have about the characters or story
4. Personal reactions about the characters or story

Then, model the think-aloud, using a selection from a piece of literature in which you show the students how you grasp understanding of the passage. You will find numerous examples of mental modeling, which is when the teacher thinks aloud, in Chapter 10 of this book. After modeling, have the students talk about the kinds of comments that you made in your mental model. One way to reinforce this strategy is to write down your thoughts and give them a copy of your notes. Then, help them categorize the sentences according to the type of information you are using in the mental model. Next, do a think-aloud together as a group. Read one
sentence aloud at a time, and ask students for comments about the text, identifying them according to the categories that you listed, and writing them on the board or overhead. Finally, have pairs of students practice think-alouds together with the next two paragraphs in the passage you have chosen, and write down their comments to share.

Once your students have learned the think-aloud procedure, you can use it as an assessment of their metacognitive abilities. Think-aloud comments can be written down so that you can save them and read them later; this step eliminates the need to be everywhere at once in your classroom as the children read. They reveal information about the strength of your readers’ prior knowledge, vocabulary understanding, ability to interpret, and ability to gather important information.

**Metacomprehension Strategy Index**

If you desire a more formal assessment tool for determining metacognition, try the Metacomprehension Strategy Index, or the MSI, created by Schmitt (1990). Designed for use with middle and upper elementary children, this questionnaire measures readers’ awareness of strategies to use when their comprehension breaks down. It is a 25-item multiple-choice survey, which asks questions about what readers do before, during, and after they read stories. For example, one item asks, “Before I begin reading, it’s a good idea to . . .” (Schmitt, 1990, p. 459), and a choice of four answers are given. The correct answer, “Read the title to see what the story is about,” is indicative of a previewing strategy that aids in comprehension. Directions for scoring, as well as reliability information, are given in the March 1990 edition of *The Reading Teacher*.

**Assessing Writing**

Reading and writing processes are reciprocal. According to Rosenblatt, “the parallels in the reading and writing processes . . . and the nature of the transaction between author and reader make it reasonable to expect that the teaching of one can affect the student’s operations in the other” (2004, p. 1,388). Chapters 9 and 13 will show you many ways to connect reading with writing instruction, and involve your students in authentic purposes for writing. I will show you the process approach, which is a method of teaching writing that mirrors the way true authors write. When writing for authentic purposes and genuine audiences, your students will need to articulate themselves clearly, using appropriate voice, acknowledging an audience, developing a pleasing writing style, and being courteous to readers by using conventional punctuation and spelling. Spandel (2001) outlines the Six Traits model of assessing writing, in which the teacher evaluates students’ writing in these areas: (1) ideas and content, (2) organization, (3) voice, (4) word choice, (5) sentence fluency, and (6) conventions. Spandel’s *Creating Writers Through 6-Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction* (2001) is an excellent source for direction on how to assess writing. Additionally, Spandel offers a thorough explanation of how to help your students assess themselves as they revise their work. Appendix B shows a partial sample rubric adapted from the Six Traits model to be used in first grade. The *Toolkit for Teachers* (Nettles, 2006) includes more rubrics.
This letter is used by Cathy Hayden, a third grade teacher in Pennsylvania.

Dear Family,

Our conference is scheduled for ______. Could you please respond to this brief list of questions and return this note to school with your child on ______ to help me better prepare for our conference?

Additionally, I would like to have something to share about your child with his or her classmates, following our conference. Although I can certainly discuss some of the positive views of your child that you and I have in common, I would like to have learned "something special" about your child at our conference. So, could you share something special with me about your child that I don’t already know? For example, perhaps you could tell me about an athletic accomplishment, a hobby, participation in Scouts or a club, a special story about a relative or pet. I welcome any picture, trophy, or other memorabilia that you may have to accompany this information.

Your child is welcome to attend our conference. In fact, you and your child might enjoy sharing the "something special" together! I look forward to meeting with you. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Cathy Hayden

 Please complete, clip, and return by __________.
 1. How does your child feel about school?

 2. What concerns do we need to be certain to address in our conference?

 3. What can I do to make your child feel more comfortable or be more successful in school?
Summary: Assessing Your Students

The reflective teacher thinks about students constantly while teaching. This habit makes sense, because if the teacher loses sight of his students, there is no point in teaching. Getting wrapped up in the mechanics, strategies, theories, and materials of teaching can cause us to forget why we’re here.

As you plan, think about how you will assess. When you teach a lesson, determine how well the students learned what you wanted them to learn. When you make decisions about materials to use, strategies to teach, and instructional methods to use, consider what you already know about your students, based on what you’ve learned through observations and the simple assessment methods that you learned in this chapter. The Reviewing the Big Picture box lists the assessment tools that were shown or described in this chapter, along with their alignment with standards.

Remember, teaching is not about the teacher. It’s about the students. That’s why getting to know the nature of the children with whom you work is so important.

Technology Resources

- [www.fdlrssprings.org/instructreslinks.htm#topinstructreslinks](www.fdlrssprings.org/instructreslinks.htm#topinstructreslinks) This web site for Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources Systems offers several links to sites that provide information about readability.
- [www.plainlanguagenetwork.org/stephens/readability.html](www.plainlanguagenetwork.org/stephens/readability.html) This web page explains readability formulas from the writer’s perspective.
- [pathways.thinkport.org/resources/reading.cfm](pathways.thinkport.org/resources/reading.cfm) Maryland Public Television sponsors this web site, called “Pathways to Freedom: Maryland and the Underground Railroad.” Click on “Reading Tips” for information on matching books to readers as well as the use of readability formulas.
- [www.man.canterbury.ac.nz/courseinfo/AcademicWriting/Flesch.htm](www.man.canterbury.ac.nz/courseinfo/AcademicWriting/Flesch.htm) Rudolf Flesch, in this article called “How to Write in Plain English,” describes his Flesch Readability formula.

Themes of the Times

Expand your knowledge of the concepts discussed in this chapter by reading current and historical articles from the New York Times by visiting the “Themes of the Times” section of the Companion Web Site.
### Reviewing the Big Picture

**Assessment Tools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Tool</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Type of Information Assessed</th>
<th>IRA Standards</th>
<th>INTASC Principles</th>
<th>NAEYC Standards</th>
<th>ACEI/NCATE Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions to ask about reading relationships</td>
<td>Calkins, <em>The Art of Teaching Reading</em>, 2001</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Records students' perceptions of reading with interview questions.</td>
<td>3.1, 4.1, 4.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and writing behaviors to observe</td>
<td>Calkins, <em>The Art of Teaching Reading</em>, 2001</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Records the manner in which the reader approaches reading, including physical factors and apparent comfort with reading.</td>
<td>3.1, 4.1, 4.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest inventories questions</td>
<td>Nettles, this text</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Determines interests, hobbies, likes, dislikes, leisure-time activities of students.</td>
<td>3.1, 4.1, 4.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways to survey interests</td>
<td>Nettles, this text</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Shows several formats for use with interest inventories, including the glyph (Bamberger &amp; Hughes, adapted by Murray).</td>
<td>3.1, 4.1, 4.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary reading attitude survey</td>
<td>McKenna &amp; Kear, <em>The Reading Teacher</em>, 1990</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Measures attitudes toward reading by using a survey that primary grade students fill out independently by circling pictures of the cartoon character Garfield.</td>
<td>3.1, 4.1, 4.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing attitude survey</td>
<td>Kear, Coffman, McKenna &amp; Ambrioso, <em>The Reading Teacher</em>, 2000</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Measures attitudes toward writing by using a survey that all ages of elementary students can complete by circling pictures of the cartoon character Garfield.</td>
<td>3.1, 4.1, 4.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader self-perception scale</td>
<td>Henk &amp; Melnick, <em>The Reading Teacher</em>, 1995</td>
<td>3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Measures how older readers perceive themselves as readers by using a survey in which students rate their agreement with statements about reading.</td>
<td>3.1, 4.1, 4.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Name</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Grade Levels</td>
<td>Difficulty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writer Self-Perception Scale</td>
<td>Bottomley, Henk &amp; Melnick, <em>The Reading Teacher</em>, 1997-1998</td>
<td>3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Measures how older students perceive themselves as writers by using a survey in which students rate their agreement with statements about different aspects of writing.</td>
<td>3.1, 4.1, 4.4</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to Read Profile</td>
<td>Gambrell, Palmer, Codling &amp; Mazzoni, <em>The Reading Teacher</em>, 1996</td>
<td>3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Measures students' self-concepts as readers and their perception of the value of reading using a survey and a conversational interview.</td>
<td>3.1, 4.1, 4.4</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yopp-Singer Segmentation Test</td>
<td>Yopp, <em>The Reading Teacher</em>, 1996</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5</td>
<td>Measures phonemic awareness by reading words to the child, who must repeat it by &quot;stretching it out&quot; and saying each of its phonemes.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergent literacy assessment</td>
<td>Graves, Juel &amp; Burns, <em>Rubrics and Other Tools for Classroom Assessment for Teaching Reading in the 21st Century</em>, 2001</td>
<td>K–2</td>
<td>Measures ability to differentiate words by asking students to reproduce them and by asking students to point to words as they are read.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concepts about Print Test</td>
<td>Clay, <em>An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement</em>, 1993</td>
<td>K–2</td>
<td>Measures awareness of the conventions of print by asking the child to &quot;read&quot; a specially prepared book; the child's ability to point out errors and nonconventional items in the text are recorded.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Checklist for observing young children</td>
<td>Nettles, this text</td>
<td>K–2</td>
<td>Measures awareness of print conventions by asking the student to &quot;share&quot; a book with the teacher.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
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## Reviewing the Big Picture (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Tool</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Type of Information Assessed</th>
<th>IRA Standards</th>
<th>INTASC Principles</th>
<th>NAEYC Standards</th>
<th>ACEI/NCATE Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet recognition checklist</td>
<td>Nettles, this text</td>
<td>K–2</td>
<td>Measures ability to recognize upper- and lowercase letters in two different fonts.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Names Test</td>
<td>Cunningham, <em>Phonics They Use</em>, 2005</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5</td>
<td>Measures decoding ability by asking students to read a list of first and last names.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>El Paso Phonics Survey</td>
<td>Shanker &amp; Ekwall, <em>Ekwall/Shanker Reading Inventory</em>, 2000</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5</td>
<td>Measures decoding ability by asking students to read a list of nonsense words.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom decoding checks</td>
<td>Steider, this text</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5</td>
<td>Measures student’s ability to blend and segment, using nonsense words that reflect word families.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Running records</td>
<td>Clay, 2000</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5</td>
<td>Measures word recognition in context and ways that the reader processes print. Determines independent, instructional, and frustrational reading levels.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscue analysis</td>
<td>Goodman &amp; Goodman, 2004</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5</td>
<td>Measures use of cueing systems; shows ability to self-correct miscues.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Retelling analysis</td>
<td>Hoyt, 1999; Routman, 1991</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Measures ability to recall important ideas in text and retell them.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Grade Levels</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Section(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Page</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fry Readability formula</strong></td>
<td>Fry, <em>The Reading Teacher</em>, 2002</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Uses a graph to plot the approximate grade level of reading materials based on number of sentences and number of syllables in 100 words.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>516</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spanish Readability formula</strong></td>
<td>Temple, Ogle, Crawford &amp; Freppon, 2005</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Uses a graph to plot the approximate grade level of reading materials written in Spanish based on number of sentences and number of syllables in 100 words.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>516</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Informal reading inventories</strong></td>
<td>Flynt &amp; Cooter, 1999; Burns &amp; Roe, 2002; Leslie &amp; Caldwell, 2000; Stieglitz, 2001</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Students read increasingly difficult graded passages and answer comprehension questions until they are at the frustrational level. This determines the match of text with reader.</td>
<td>3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>516</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Think-alouds</strong></td>
<td>Oster, 2001</td>
<td>3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Students voice their thoughts as they read, and the teacher records notes about their metacognitive abilities.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>516</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metacomprension Strategy Index</strong></td>
<td>Schmitt, <em>The Reading Teacher</em>, 1990</td>
<td>3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>A multiple-choice survey of students’ reading habits and behaviors.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>516</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Assessments</strong></td>
<td>Spandel (2001)</td>
<td>K–2, 3–5, 6–8</td>
<td>Rubrics are used for analyzing students’ writing with six traits.</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>516</td>
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