

Reading Assessment, Grades Primary–3

VIEWING GUIDE

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Introduction

The *Reading Assessment, Grades Primary–3 DVD*, created by the Nova Scotia Department of Education, features Nova Scotian teachers and students working together in a variety of grades primary–3 learning environments.

Assessment is defined in Nova Scotian curriculum documents as the process of gathering information on student learning. Sharon Taberski (2000) reminds us that “the whole purpose of assessment is to find out what children do well and what we need to teach them.” It is within that context that the *Active Young Readers, Grades Primary–3, Assessment Resource* package was created, and that this DVD has been produced.

As demonstrated by the teachers and students in this DVD, assessment in reading is an integrated and ongoing part of an effective reading program that follows as its defining model the gradual release of

responsibility. Assessment for learning takes place throughout the instructional cycle, in whole-group, small-group, and individual interactions. In addition to classroom work, the DVD also includes feature interviews with the classroom teachers.

The *Reading Assessment, Grades Primary–3 DVD* showcases three classrooms that represent a cross-section of schools and teachers from across Nova Scotia. The DVD was created to accompany the *Active Young Readers, Grades Primary–3, Assessment Resource* package, and features both specific references to the resource as well as more generic and open-ended examples of effective assessment. The viewing guide can be used by individual teachers, small groups, or entire staffs as they work their way through the DVD; it provides a brief synopsis of each segment and includes guiding questions for discussion and consideration.

Using the DVD

Whether the DVD is viewed for personal professional learning opportunities, in staff meetings, in professional learning communities, or with grade-specific groups, teachers will use the resource to suit their purposes.

Following are some suggestions for viewing the DVD:

Before Viewing

- Decide upon which questions to focus and consider the questions with your practice in mind.
- As a group, select a single question on which to focus throughout the viewing.
- Determine a perspective from which to view the DVD—teacher or student point of view.
- Decide on a particular issue or “burning question” on which to focus before viewing the DVD.

During Viewing

- For longer segments, stop the DVD several times to discuss a particular point or observation.
- In partners, use a reciprocal strategy to discuss what has been seen so far. One person speaks first, then the partner adds to the conversation without repeating. Partners alternate who speaks first as the segment is stopped several times.
- Use the T-chart below to track your thinking about what resonated with you in the interviews and classroom.

After Viewing

- Identify the key messages from the segment before using the questions you considered before viewing.
- What are the most significant assessment issues for the whole group at this particular time?
- Identify specific questions to be discussed in small groups and then report back to the whole group.

What Resonated with Me	
In the interviews	In the classrooms

Reading Assessment, Grades Primary–3 DVD

Segment	Highlights	Time
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overview of the assessment triangulation model: conversations, observations, products • importance of relationship in the assessment process • examples and illustrations of a range of assessment tools, including and beyond oral reading records • the importance of ongoing daily assessment using a range of assessment tools 	12:20
2. Organizing for Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tools and tips for organizing and managing the data • finding structured and less-structured opportunities within the day • the role of independent practice • development of stamina and independence through the establishment of routines • illustration of two different systems for organizing materials 	13:52
3. Beginning the Assessment Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment with the youngest readers • concepts about print • informal conversations • beginning assessment early in the year • how assessments determine a starting point for instruction 	10:30
4. Oral Reading Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • benchmarks and ongoing reading records • reading records with students in various stages of reading development • comprehension conversations • debrief and goal setting • supporting students when the text is too easy or too hard 	21:54
5. Conferring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unique place of the conference in assessment • teacher and student roles in conferring • criteria, structure, and examples of both formal and informal conferences • role of descriptive feedback in student achievement • conferring as part of an oral reading record • conferring on its own • building student skill in self-assessment • setting goals with students 	16:51
6. Using What We Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using assessment to inform instruction • looking for trends and patterns • criteria for different types of grouping • small-group instruction based on assessment • collaborative planning • the planning process, based on data from ongoing assessment 	9:16

Nova Scotia Department of Education Principles of Assessment

The Nova Scotia grades primary–3 English language arts curriculum guide outlines big ideas derived from research and proven best practices that should form the framework for instruction and assessment. This DVD highlights rich examples of what these principles look like in grades primary–3 classrooms, with a

particular focus on reading assessment and instruction. Keep the Principles of Assessment and the specific segment titles in mind while viewing each video section. A table has been provided below to record strong examples of where these five principles of assessment might be highlighted in the DVD.

Principles of Assessment	Observations and Evidence
The primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to inform teaching and to promote and encourage learning.	
Assessment and evaluation must be an ongoing and integral part of the teaching/learning process. It is one continuous cycle consisting of collecting evidence, interpreting evidence, providing feedback to students, and making instructional decisions.	

Principles of Assessment	Observations and Evidence
<p>Assessment and evaluation must be consistent with beliefs about curriculum and classroom practices supporting twenty-first century learners.</p>	
<p>Assessment and evaluation processes involve the use of multiple sources of information collected in a variety of contexts. To make decisions about any aspect of a student's learning, the teacher gathers evidence of that learning at different times in different contexts and in different ways.</p>	
<p>Assessment and evaluation processes recognize learners as active partners in their own learning. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own growth, considering progress, strengths and needs, and goals.</p>	

DVD Viewing Details

Segment 1 Synopsis: Introduction

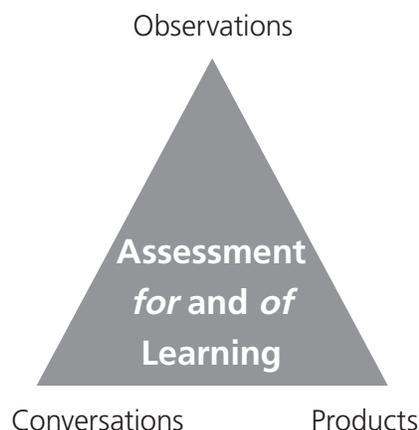
One of the key assumptions of the *Active Young Readers, Grades Primary–3, Reading Assessment Resource* package is that assessment happens every day in a variety of ways in all classrooms. Effective and ongoing assessment for learning is a foundational part of any Reading Workshop. It is through the skilled and deliberate analysis of accumulated evidence that decisions about instruction are made.

In this segment, we see a quick overview of the three major assessment events: conversations, observations, and products. Our featured teachers also discuss ways in which they build relationships and get to know their students as people as well as readers. Through discussion and demonstration, the teachers highlight a range of assessment tools including, and beyond, the oral reading record.

Guiding Questions

1. What key messages about assessment did you find in the words from the featured teachers?
2. Donna shares her belief that assessment is first and foremost about relationship. How do you see this modelled in the DVD, and how is this statement related to your practice?
3. In this segment, we see students and teachers involved in a variety of assessments. What types of routines and classroom environments must be in place for this to regularly happen?
4. In the area of conversation, discuss the types, scope, and purpose of the assessment. What did the teachers learn, and how might this impact subsequent instruction?
5. In the area of observation, discuss the types, scope, and purpose of the assessment shown in the DVD. What did the teachers learn, and how might this impact subsequent instruction?
6. In the area of product, discuss the types, scope, and purpose of the assessment shown in the DVD. What did the teachers learn, and how might this impact subsequent instruction?
7. Discuss the assessment tools identified or demonstrated by the teachers in this segment. Discuss advantages and cautions for each tool.
8. Kim identified a goal involving a word-solving strategy for one of her readers—little words in big words. Discuss the effectiveness of Kim’s assessment and instruction. Identify and discuss when some strategies, such as this one, might not be effective and how assessment will determine this.
9. Discuss where in this video segment you saw evidence of the Principles of Assessment in action.

Triangulation



Segment 2 Synopsis: Organizing for Assessment

One of the greatest challenges for teachers is the organization and management of time and materials for assessment. Whether the assessment opportunity is structured or less formal, it takes deliberate planning and organization of the classroom and the students to make this happen.

In this segment, teachers share and demonstrate tips, tools, and techniques for finding assessment opportunities within a busy day, managing and organizing the evidence, and developing classroom routines to enable effective assessment. We will see several different systems for organizing assessment data.

Guiding Questions

1. What key messages about assessment did you find in the words from the featured teachers?
2. Consider the routines that must be in place for the successful assessment opportunities highlighted in the DVD. Discuss how they might have been established.
3. Discuss the role of independent practice time in assessment. Identify and discuss other times when assessment might also take place.
4. Discuss the building of stamina in students and how this might be done in an age-appropriate way from the beginning of the year.
5. Discuss the strengths, great ideas, and key messages about assessment demonstrated in Rachel's management system.
6. Discuss the strengths, great ideas, and key messages about assessment demonstrated in Kim's management system.
7. Discuss how you might use elements from each system to create a management system that will work for you. Be sure to share ideas you have developed and found effective in your own classroom.
8. Discuss where in this video segment you saw evidence of the Principles of Assessment in action.

Components of Reading Instruction and Assessment

Time to Teach	Time to Practise	Time to Share and Reflect
<p>What?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thinking processes • reading strategies • comprehension strategies • text features • fluency • elements of genre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – fiction/non-fiction – poetry • concepts of print <p>How?</p> <p>Explicitly teach through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read-aloud/think-aloud • modelling • shared reading • mini-lesson <p>Materials such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • picture books • short passages from longer text • mentor text • enlarged text/LCD • anchor charts • multimedia 	<p>Students:</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid gray; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p>Independent Reading</p> <p>with an awareness of the stages of reading development (Emergent, Early, Transitional, Fluent)</p> <p><i>Teaching in Action: Grades Primary–3, p. 25</i></p> </div> <p>Teacher Guided Reading (small-group instruction); individual student conferences; ongoing reading assessments</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted gray;"/> <p>In addition to independent reading practice, other reading experiences may include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading with a partner • making book choices • responding in writing and other ways of representing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using technology • literacy centres • literature circles • book talks • book clubs • Reader’s Theatre • talking about their reading 	<p>Share and Reflect on Instructional Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whole class • small group • individual <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • celebrate success • share application of strategy taught • talk about ... • personal reflections • book talk • self-assessment • think-pair-share • set/revisit personal goals • plan next steps

Segment 3 Synopsis: Beginning the Assessment Process

Assessment begins very early in the school year. The purpose of this early assessment is to determine a starting place for instruction. Teachers build on what students already know to develop effective instruction that will help them grow as learners.

This segment features two strands. One focuses on the types of assessment teachers might use with primary students as they begin formal schooling. The other features the types of assessment used early in the year.

Guiding Questions

1. What key messages about assessment did you find in the words from the featured teachers?
2. Discuss examples from the DVD of how teachers determine what the student already knows and how they use that information to plan for instruction.
3. Discuss the quality and purposes of the “drop in” conversations that the teachers have with their students, and consider how these conversations might grow and change throughout the year.
4. Compare Rachel’s analyses of her two students and how her assessment leads to very different instructional decisions.
5. Discuss the variety of assessment opportunities highlighted throughout the DVD and how these assessments might lead to effective instruction for the students involved.
6. Choose the strand that resonates with you (either assessment for the primary students or assessment early in the year) and discuss your own practice and what you have found to be successful and effective.
7. The voice-over describes assessment as “either individually or as part of a whole group.” Discuss effective assessment practices for both of those contexts.
8. Kim states that her assessment practices must be quick and easy. Discuss how “quick and easy” does not mean superficial.
9. Discuss how assessment practices change and evolve throughout the year in your classroom.
10. Discuss where in this video segment you saw evidence of the Principles of Assessment in action.

Segment 4 Synopsis: Oral Reading Records

An oral reading record is a classroom assessment tool that provides teachers with information about how a student processes text. The purpose of an oral reading record is to determine what a student has under control in reading, and to use this information to plan the next steps in instruction. Whether used on a daily basis or in a benchmark assessment setting, an oral reading record comprises the use of a uniform procedure, including an introduction, comprehension conversation, and debrief.

In this segment, we see teachers doing benchmark and everyday oral reading records with students across a range of stages of reading development. Teachers demonstrate how to set up the session, give an effective introduction, and engage students in a comprehension conversation following the reading. Teachers use prompts to get to deeper levels of understanding with their students. Skillful prompts elicit information on literal understanding, as well as encouraging students to demonstrate and discuss their understanding at a deeper level.

We also see teachers supporting students for whom the text is too easy or too difficult.

Guiding Questions

1. What key messages about assessment did you find in the words from the featured teachers?
2. Compare and contrast benchmark assessment and everyday oral reading records.
3. Discuss where the oral reading record fits in the assessment process. What are the purposes for this particular tool and what issues are not addressed through an oral reading record?
4. Discuss the purpose and benefits of the introduction in the oral reading record.
5. Discuss the purpose and benefits of prompts in the oral reading record. Consider how to structure prompts in such a way that they help the students demonstrate what they know and get to deeper levels of understanding.
6. Discuss how the teachers in the DVD refocused students for whom the text was too easy or too difficult.
7. Discuss the significance of a uniform process for taking an oral reading record.
8. Discuss the role of debriefing, goal setting, and instruction as you observed it in the DVD.
9. Discuss the instructional decisions that might be made by teachers following the oral reading records we observed in the DVD.
10. Discuss where in this video segment you saw evidence of the Principles of Assessment in action.

Segment 5 Synopsis: Conferring

One-on-one conferences allow teachers to gain some of the most valuable information about their students as readers. Conferences take place as follow-ups to oral reading records, or independent of oral reading records. During a conference, the student takes the lead, talking with the teacher about their reading, the strategies they use, and their thinking.

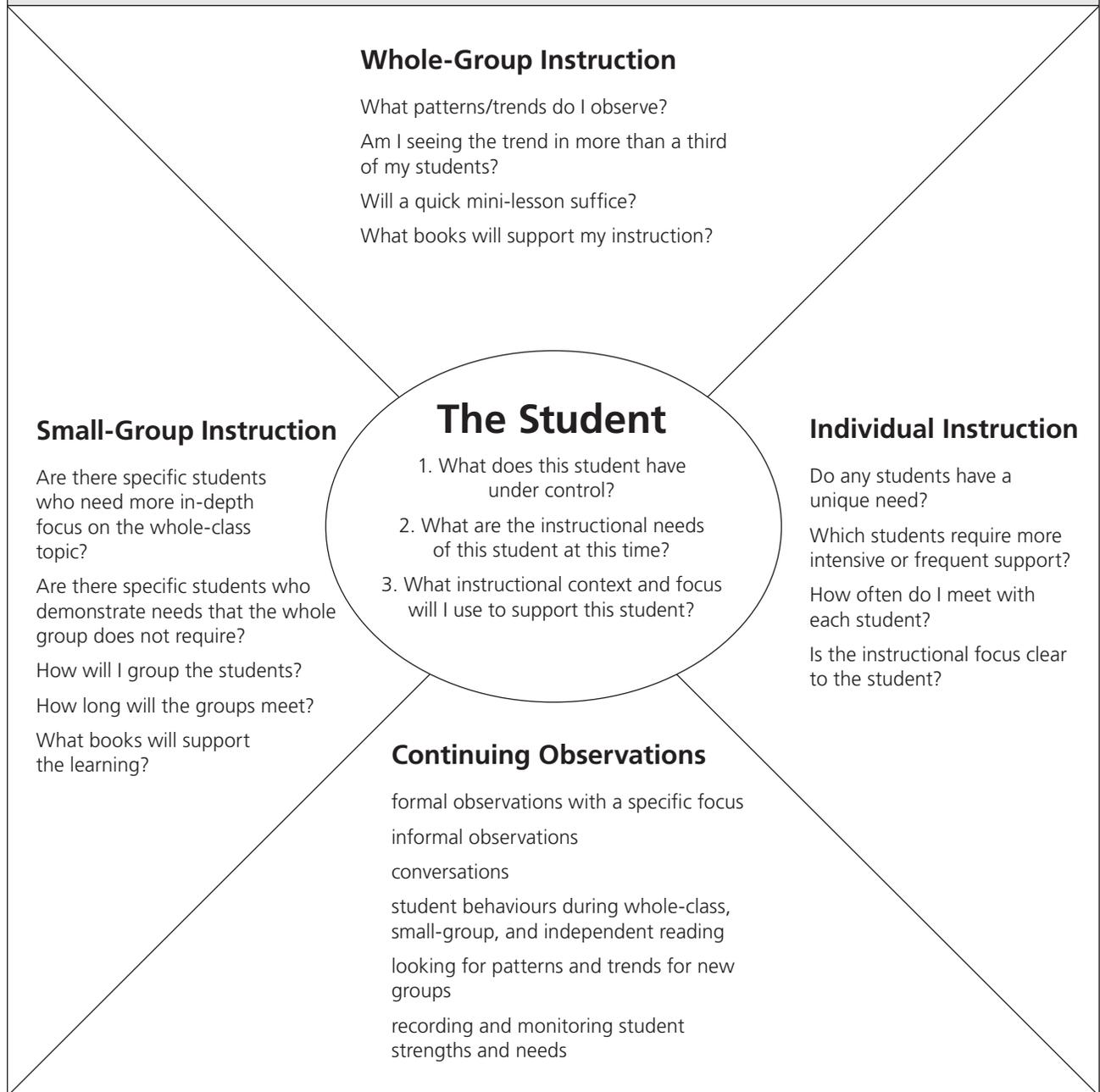
In this segment, we see teachers engaging with their students in a variety of conference formats. Both formal and less formal conferences will be highlighted, as well as the setting of post-conference goals. Teachers will use immediate descriptive feedback to encourage and instruct their students as they move back and forth between assessment and instruction.

Guiding Questions

What key messages about assessment did you find in the words from the featured teachers?

1. Rachel speaks about how, in a conference, the student takes the lead as speaker. We know that students do not find this easy. Discuss how this might evolve over time.
2. Conferring combines assessment and instruction. Discuss where you see both of these features throughout the DVD.
3. Discuss the criteria and structures of informal conferences as demonstrated in the DVD.
4. Discuss the criteria and structures of formal conferences as demonstrated in the DVD.
5. Descriptive feedback is an important assessment tool. Discuss how descriptive feedback can be used as both an assessment tool and a teaching tool.
6. Discuss the examples of descriptive feedback you noticed on the DVD.
7. Kim uses a goal book as part of her conferring work. Discuss this tool and its benefits.
8. Conferring with students lets teachers see where students are stuck. In this DVD teachers often encountered students who use the “sound it out” strategy for decoding singularly, to the exclusion of any other thinking. Discuss how the teachers tried to move students beyond focusing on only one strategy.
9. Discuss where in this video segment you saw evidence of the Principles of Assessment in action.

Making Instructional Decisions Based on Assessment



Segment 6 Synopsis: Using What We Learn

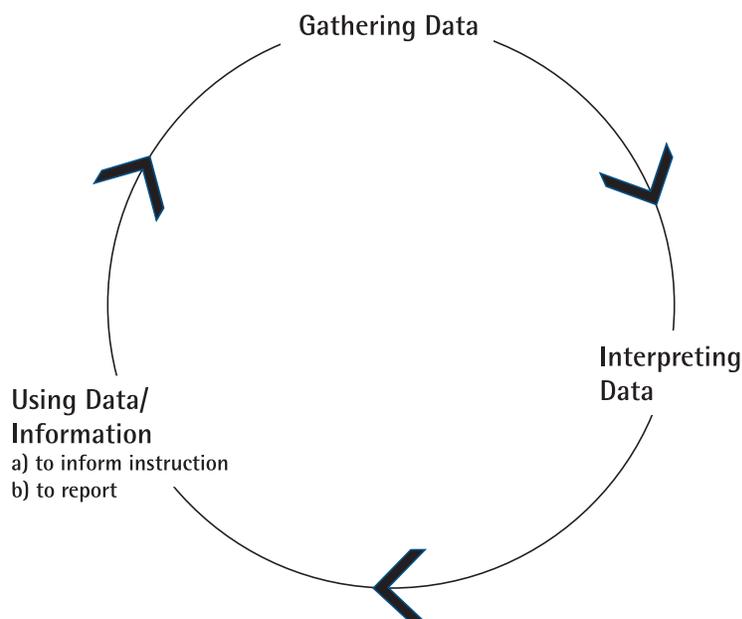
Simply gathering and organizing evidence is not enough. It is only in the careful and deliberate analysis of all information that effective instructional planning takes place.

The purpose of daily “assessment for learning” is to inform instruction as immediately as possible. Gathering evidence through a variety of effective and functional assessment tools is an important process, but it is how this data is used to scaffold student learning that is most important.

In this segment, we see teachers working with a variety of small groups and individuals. The content of the interactions has been determined through the use of a variety of assessment tools. Teachers discuss the criteria for forming the groups and share their planning for instruction. The segment also highlights the role of collaborative planning and sharing of ideas and evidence with other teachers as part of a team.

Guiding Questions

1. What key messages about assessment did you find in the words from the featured teachers?
2. Discuss the difference between trends, snapshots, and patterns. Discuss examples from the DVD and from your own experiences.
3. What were the differences in criteria and purpose for the small groups?
4. Discuss the types of assessments that helped the teachers decide how to form the groups and select the topics.
5. On the DVD we saw teachers doing additional assessment during instruction. Discuss how assessment and instruction often blend together.
6. Discuss the collaborative planning process. Who might be involved, how might it work, what are the benefits?
7. Discuss where in this video segment you saw evidence of the Principles of Assessment in action.



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