

Preface

Travelers to a different country often buy a guidebook to understand the local culture, identify the main attractions, and learn a few helpful phrases to get around more easily. For many teachers of English language learners (ELLs), assessment is like visiting a foreign country. Assessment has its own culture, traditions, and special language. This guidebook is meant to help classroom teachers find their way more easily in the world of language assessment. The authors—experienced teachers and teacher-trainers—are your helpful tour guides. They will explain the important features of language assessment, point out essential phrases, and guide you on a journey of discovery as you learn how to make better use of assessment in your teaching.

Good assessment mirrors good teaching—they go hand in hand. Because there are such a great variety of English teaching settings, there are also a great variety of assessment techniques. Some teachers teach English as a second language (ESL) to adult learners in intensive English programs, in community colleges, or in adult education programs. Other teachers teach English as a foreign language (EFL) to children, adults, or both children and adult learners. Finally, some teachers teach regular content such as math or science to nonnative-speaking students in kindergarten, elementary, middle, or high schools (i.e., K–12) in English-speaking countries. This group can be referred to as ESOL (English to speakers of other languages), ELL, or even ESL learners. Regardless of the setting in which you teach, assessment should be a part of instruction from the very beginning of class planning.

In each chapter, you will encounter some ways two teachers (composites) deal with assessment in their classrooms. Ms. Wright, an experienced teacher well versed in assessment, models best practice while her less-experienced colleague, Mr. Knott, tries assessment concepts and techniques that are new to him. Through their experiences, you will:

- understand the cornerstones of all good assessment
- learn useful techniques for testing and alternative assessment
- become aware of issues in assessing reading, writing, listening, and speaking
- discover ways to help your students develop good test-taking strategies
- become familiar with the processes and procedures of assessment

Ms. Wright and Mr. Knott do not represent real individuals. They are composites of many teachers, all of whom have contributed to this book.

A final chapter focuses on the special needs of K-12 teachers in assessing English language learners in content areas, a major concern at a time of increased standardized testing.

The book starts with "Are You Testwise?" So why not start your journey with this pretest on page ix now?