Reading Assessment

Diane Stephens, editor
ISBN 978-0-8141-3077-3 • No. 30773
$24.95 member/$33.95 nonmember

Through case studies of individual students and lively portraits of elementary classrooms, editor Diane Stephens and colleagues explore how artful PreK–5 teachers come to know their students through assessment and use that knowledge to customize reading instruction. Throughout the book, the educators profiled—classroom teachers, reading specialists, and literacy coaches—work together to take personal and professional responsibility for knowing their students and ensuring that every child becomes a successful reader. The teachers detail the assessment tools they use, how they make sense of the data they collect, and how they use that information to inform instruction.

Like the other books in the Literacy Assessment strand of NCTE’s Principles in Practice imprint, Reading Assessment is based on the IRA–NCTE Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing, Revised Edition, which outlines the elements of high-quality literacy assessment. These educators show us how putting those standards in action creates the conditions under which readers thrive.

To order, visit our website: https://secure.ncte.org/store/ or call 877-369-6283.
In schools everywhere, educators are getting together to remodel literacy learning.

Share Your Story of Remodeling Literacy Learning! www.literacyinlearning.org/map

Sign your team up for free on the Literacy in Learning Exchange and join the movement of educators who are making change happen in their schools.
New from Lucy Calkins and Colleagues at Teachers College Reading and Writing Project

UNITS OF STUDY
Opinion Argument, Information Narrative Writing

“One of the most potent ways to accelerate students’ progress as learners is by equipping them with first-rate skills in writing.”
—Lucy Calkins

This treasure chest of experiences, techniques, questions, and tried-and-true methods offers teachers:

- A proven, systematic, year-long workshop curriculum
- Learning progressions aligned to world-class standards
- Assessment and alternative units for differentiated, customized, responsive writing instruction

3–4 Units of Study
A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop
If... Then... Curriculum: Assessment-Based Instruction
Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions
Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM

WEB Heinemann.com • CALL 800.225.5800 • FAX 877.231.5980
National Council of Teachers of English—
Your Partner in Professional Learning

Are you responsible for planning professional learning experiences to address Common Core implementation challenges?

While many know NCTE as the home of award-winning professional journals, national conferences, and the ReadWriteThink website, you might not know we have also been quietly supporting K–12 schools in building effective professional learning plans.

We can:
- Design professional learning plans that fit any budget and timeline
- Select research-based literacy resources applicable across the disciplines
- Identify opportunities to evaluate your professional learning efforts and build long-term capacity

Why partner with NCTE?
For over 100 years, NCTE has been at the forefront of fostering effective literacy practices. As the professional home of the literacy community, NCTE is uniquely qualified to provide professional learning that enhances teaching while raising student achievement.

Get started with a free consultation. Contact the NCTE Professional Learning Division at profdev@ncte.org, or call 1-800-369-6283.

Resources for Teachers in a Time of Core Standards

NCTE Book Series
Four books, organized by grade level that feature:
- Authentic, useful advice from authors who work in real classrooms, with real students;
- An examination of the key features of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and answers to some common questions they raise;
- Vignettes from individual classrooms that show how teachers have developed their successful practice, complete with examples of student work and other artifacts;
- Helpful visual aids that demonstrate how NCTE principles of effective teaching can align with standards; and
- Suggestions for further professional development for both individual educators and communities of practice.
$24.95 member/$33.95 nonmember per book
Grades K–2, Sui Long with William Hutchinson and Justine Neiderhiser
ISBN 978-0-8141-4940-9, No. 49409
Grades 3–5, Jeff Williams with Elizabeth Homan and Sarah Swafford
ISBN 978-0-8141-4941-6, No. 49416
Grades 6–8, Tonya Perry with Rebecca Manery
Grades 9–12, Sarah Brown Wessing—with Danielle Lilge and Crystal VanKooten

NCTE Virtual Conference Recordings
Four conferences, organized by grade level (K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12)
$150 per conference
Each conference includes four 60-minute session recordings focused on helping schools interpret the Common Core State Standards, contextualize and connect to the CCSS, and plan units of instruction keeping students at the center. Recordings can be downloaded and revisited as often as necessary.
K–12 Package Price: $450
Save $150 when you buy all four conferences for your school or district.
Package Includes:
- K–2 No. 15431
- 3–5 No. 15432
- 6–8 No. 15433
- 9–12 No. 15434
- K–12 No. 15435

To order visit www.ncte.org/store, or call us at 877-369-6283.
Journals from NCTE

Here’s what subscribers are saying about their NCTE journals...

I subscribe to these journals so I will feel less isolated and more secure in my teaching decisions. I also join a professional community which believes in—and enacts—the intellect and identity of teachers.
—Stephen, Secondary member from Massachusetts

The variety of points of view on current topics in ELA; always and especially the Goya by Jeffrey Wilhelm (Voices from the Middle) and the columns on books.
—Linda, Middle Level member from Delaware

Ideas, articles that I, as a school librarian, can share with staff members and colleagues.
—Marney, Middle Level member from Arizona

I’ve been a member of NCTE for about 25 years. For me, NCTE was a place where I went to become a professional. English Journal published the first piece that I [wrote]. Now I’ve written 12 or 13 books. . . . It’s all really the result of NCTE’s investment in me. I had a mini-grant to do a teacher research study and, with that invitation, whole worlds opened up to me. . . . I’m saying all of this to show how great the Council is. It provided all those opportunities for me to grow.
—Carol, Secondary member from Illinois

Articles about the teaching and learning of reading at all ages.
—Alton, Elementary member from Minnesota

Subscribe now . . . www.ncte.org/journals

As an NCTE member, you have access to over a century of journal issues online. Most recent two years limited to current subscribers.
"If we’re free from the burden of trying to be completely original, we can stop trying to make something out of nothing, and we can embrace influence instead of running away from it."

(Austin Kleon, 2012, p. 8).

As we write this editorial, the summer is upon us and arts festivals abound all around us. For communities everywhere, the arts bring people together in a collective search for an elusive understanding of “art” experience, and for many, offer a chance for viewers and artists to enjoy—and perhaps purchase—artworks that they can imagine in their home and professional spaces. The arts, as Sir Ken Robinson (2009; 2013) suggests, support creativity, innovation, and the potential of human resources. For Maxine Greene (1995), the arts let us know we are alive, and for Carla Escoda, ballet teacher and art blogger, “... the arts teach us: to illuminate the human condition, to think in metaphors, to express ideas in thought-provoking ways, to imagine something better—which is how one moves the world forward” (Huffington Post, 2012). These are ideas that are taken up in this issue devoted to the arts in language arts.

What better way to talk about two concepts highlighted in our Thoughts from the Editors—artwork and art work—than with an image created by Antonio, a five-year-old, inspired and influenced by Van Gogh’s “Starry Night” (see Fig. 1). As an artwork, or the art object, viewers can easily recognize familiar elements of the original Van Gogh in Antonio’s rendition, from the undulating landscape to the bright stars in a cloudless night, from the tall tree in the foreground to the wonderful movement in the lines that make up the sky, the hills, and the village.

However, studied as art work—or the processes that go into the making of the art object—critical information and insights can be gleaned about Antonio as a meaning maker. For example, Antonio places great emphasis on the stars—they cover the night sky, are colored bright yellow, and the twinkling is represented by a single black dot.

**Figure 1.** Antonio, age 5, has created his version of Van Gogh’s *Starry Night*, using colored markers on white construction paper.
The arts in language arts . . .
must be taken seriously, and
educators need to understand
art as a meaning-making
system through which we
can learn about the child’s
thinking around what they do.

Antonio is expressing a “star-ness” or “twinkling star-ness”; the circles with dots are not meant to be representational, but rather they convey an essence of what twinkling stars mean to him. With colored markers less forgiving than Van Gogh’s use of oil paint, Antonio also creates the vibrancy of the dark blue night sky through the lines that shift back and forth, up and down, and side to side. Antonio’s use of foreground, mid-ground, and background are clearly evident by his use of size and shape. The tall cone-like object references the tall evergreens of the original work, while small buildings grace the bottom of the canvas and show the distance of the village from this tree.

If we had more space, we could also talk about how Antonio planned this piece, specifically noting how colors respond to and interact with each other on the canvas. All of this talk of Antonio’s image is meant to emphasize that the artworks that children create in classrooms offer insights into how they think, and how innovative, imaginative, and metaphorical they are in their use of objects to convey emotion, content, and composition. However, we also note how Antonio has, in Kleon’s words, “embraced [the] influence” (2012, p. 8) of Van Gogh’s work, and like Kandinsky, how he has appropriated cultural objects and expressions to convey his interpretation and meaning (use of color to express night, stars, and composition). What Antonio’s work helps us understand is the significance of taking children’s art seriously, both in terms of process and product. While process–product lines of inquiry in writing are long-standing, such is not the case with seriously studying children’s art; we have yet to tap the surface of how and what children mean in their visual renderings.

Paul Klee, a painter, valued the experiences and the art of children, particularly after discovering a number of his own childhood artworks in his parents’ storage shed, which he identified in a letter to his fiancé as “the most significant . . . I have made until now” (Fineberg, 1998, p. B8). These images so moved him that his later work was highly influenced by them, and he became a collector of children’s artworks. Other painters, such as Kandinsky, Dubuffet, and Miró (among others), were highly influenced by what children created, including their artworks. Kandinsky wrote in 1912 that in children’s art, “The inner sound of the subject is revealed automatically,” but he was more interested to note at what age children actually appropriated cultural symbols and objects in their art (Fineberg, p. B8). While these aforementioned artists were interested in the artworks that children made, Picasso was fascinated with the processes, or the art work, through which children created their art. He studied how children worked in art, observing them and the processes through which they invented things, especially through their imaginative play in which, for example, a pan becomes a hat or a drum.

All this talk about children’s art is to say that the arts in language arts, especially when children are asked to create artworks in classes, must be taken seriously, and educators need to understand art as a meaning-making system through which we can learn about the child’s thinking around what they do. The authors in this issue take up the seriousness of art as a meaning-making system and offer insights into how language arts educators can substantively understand the art work of children and the artworks that children create in the classroom.

In “The Art of Learning to Be Critically Literate,” Jerome C. Harste situates the arts squarely within three components of a strong language arts program: meaning making, “language” study, and inquiry-based learning—all with strong practical examples that educators can implement in the classroom. He then presents four arguments as to why the arts are critical and central to language arts learning. In “Creating Digital Comics in Response to Literature: Aesthetics, Aesthetic Transactions, and Meaning Making,” Kelly Wissman and Sean Costello discuss the importance of studying digital
compositions through lenses that are attuned to the arts, the aesthetic transaction, and student perspectives. By positioning students’ perspectives as central to creating their digital projects, Wissman and Costello report that students gained “new insights into themselves and their abilities to be creative.” Students experimented with elements of art such as color, line, font, and image, and understood how their meanings shifted when multiple sign systems were considered in this project.

This issue also showcases the recipients of the 2014 NCTE Outstanding Language Arts Educators award, Heidi Mills and Tim O’Keefe. Written by Dinah Volk, the article shares the insights and thinking behind Heidi and Tim’s work at the Center for Inquiry in Columbia, South Carolina. Also featured is an article written by Barbara A. Ward and Terrell A. Young on Joyce Sidman, the 2013 recipient of the NCTE Excellence in Poetry for Children Award. In this reflective piece, readers will get to know the influences that inform Joyce’s poetry.

The Research and Policy department discusses the Common Core State Standards and Australian Curriculum English in light of narrative and multimodality, while the Professional Book Reviews department highlights professional books that explore the potential and power of teaching children how to make and represent meaning across sign systems. The Children’s Literature Reviews department presents the recipients of NCTE’s Orbis Pictus Award given for excellence in the writing of nonfiction for children. Commentaries by a number of readers offer personal insights into how children work thoughtfully with the arts.

This issue concludes with Conversation Currents and features Sir Ken Robinson, an internationally recognized scholar, speaker, and leader in the development and commitment to the arts, creativity, innovation, and the potential of human resources. In this interview, Sir Ken Robinson talks about how he became interested in the arts through drama, his ideas on assessment, and the importance of engaging people in active and significant learning.

We hope the articles in this issue will prompt you to dig into your parents’, grandparents’, or your own closets to find artworks that were stored away for years, and rediscover the art work that went into making these pieces. Or, perhaps you’ll take a second and third look at the artworks created by your students or your children to better understand the art work that underpins these pieces.

References