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# How Do I Approach Assessment From an Asset-Based Perspective?



## WHAT IS AN ASSET-BASED PERSPECTIVE?

An asset-based perspective refers to looking for and noticing what students are already doing well. It's seeking out the many positives that already exist and persist in each of our students. In her 2020 book *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*, Gholdy Muhammad offers that "history from Black communities tells us that educators don't need to empower youth or give them brilliance or genius. Instead, the power and genius is already within them" (p. 13). Just imagine the great shift in our schools if all school personnel approached students with this powerful belief and perspective.

The children in your classroom come to you with so much to share, offer, and achieve. Rather than focusing on what a student is *not* doing, reframe your thinking to ask what a student *is* doing and how you can use that to support them in continuing to thrive and grow. All of your students enter your classroom with many assets. Your most important job as a teacher is to recognize those assets and support students in building upon them.

### *Five Key Principles to Shifting to an Asset-Based Perspective*

1. Internalize the truth that all students already have highly developed interests, reading habits, skills, and strategies.
2. Make an effort to seek out and notice those interests, reading habits, skills, and strategies.
3. Intentionally name and acknowledge all of your students' noticed assets so they will continue to use them and recognize that their teacher sees and believes in them.
4. Rather than viewing things students are *not* doing as readers, reframe this thinking as possible next steps to teach to help students grow.
5. Always seek your students' input. Offer frequent opportunities for them to share their assets and what they feel their possible next steps may be.

To shift your words and actions to an asset-based perspective, it is first important to start shifting your thoughts and mindset. Start looking for what students *are* doing successfully. Pay attention to their approximations and small steps toward progress. Instead of telling students what they are *not* doing, invite them to practice next steps to help them continually grow as readers. A few simple language and thought swaps will help with this reframing shift.

Observation	Instead of Thinking/ Saying . . .	Reframe Your Thoughts and Words
As Mei is reading aloud, she uses beautiful inflection within phrases but is not yet pausing at periods.	Mei is not pausing at periods when she reads.	Mei uses such beautiful expression as she reads. She's now ready for a next step as a reader. To make her reading sound more like talking, I can teach her to pause each time she comes to a period.
Wilson often chats off-topic during partner reading time.	Wilson needs to stay on task and stop talking.	Wilson is a reader who values conversations with a partner. To make the most of those conversations, I can support him in generating a list of things he and his partner can talk about during reading time to continue to help him grow as a reader.
Deshaun seems to consistently gravitate toward graphic novels and other highly visual texts.	Deshaun reads too many graphic novels. He needs to read more variety.	Deshaun is a reader who finds value in visual texts. I should honor what he values while also introducing him to new texts, such as graphic nonfiction and illustration-rich fiction that I think might line up with his interests.

## Notes

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