

Foreword

Rick Stiggins has spent his professional life working with students, teachers, school leaders—and assessments—and this book recounts the evolution of his thinking about how best to use assessment to improve education. Stiggins understands the uses and misuses of assessments, but he sees there has been much more of the latter—especially with the increasing use of high-stakes annual standardized tests. He explains the problems and their solutions in such a comprehensive and compelling way, we may finally get some action on the phenomenon of assessment.

Drawing on detailed research evidence and his own close work with practitioners and researchers, Stiggins leaves no stone unturned. He shows how and why assessment, which started off as a great potential source of improvement for what ails schools, has become the single biggest albatross in the reform package. The first four chapters not only document the problem of current assessment, but also show how and why we have become mired in a vicious circle of wasted effort and resources in the billions of dollars. No one can read these chapters without increasing dismay.

Chapter 4 brings this bad pre-history into focus, by addressing head on the issue of why annual testing has not improved schools. The culprit is the naïve assumption of policy makers about the role of testing combined with a massive lack of assessment expertise at all levels. The bottom line is that there is almost no focus in the system on examining the impact of testing on day-to-day teaching or on learning and student success. Having revealed the “assessment emperor” as having no clothes, Stiggins spends the remaining three chapters mapping out a fundamentally different role for assessment.

We are then treated to a wonderfully clear and inspiring chapter on a new assessment vision for schools, including a powerful, insightful section on “the emotional dynamics of being evaluated.” With this vision as a foundation Stiggins turns to strategy, starting with the roles of school and district leaders. He formulates three “local priorities”—very clear, specific, and doable.

In the final chapter Stiggins offers specific suggestions about how to implement useful assessments that contribute to student learning, this time speaking specifically to the measurement community and testing industry. *Revolutionize Assessment* is both a deeply personal and professional book, and it weaves these two dimensions together beautifully. The message is clear, it is essential, and it is both a cry of frustration and a solution delivered on a platter. It is time to re-position assessment. Rick Stiggins has given us the ideas and tools to do so—a great legacy.

Michael Fullan
Professor Emeritus
OISE/University of Toronto