

Preface

It's strange. The opening to this preface is as relevant today as it was a decade ago when this book was first conceptualized. So I repeat: In his seminal book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Thomas Kuhn envisions a paradigm shift as the point in time when an overwhelming mass of accumulated knowledge reaches a critical point that forces us to adjust our way of thinking. The United States continues to undergo a paradigm shift in the field of educational assessment, albeit of a slightly different nature than in the early years of the new millennium. This transformation can be attributed to changes in demography, policy, theory, and practice.

Assessing English Language Learners: Bridges to Educational Equity—Connecting Academic Language Proficiency to Student Achievement (Assessing English Language Learners) is organized around a series of bridges that leads educators toward a vision of educational parity for all students. Each chapter highlights an equity issue that educators face and illustrates how we can promote positive change through assessment in reasonable and practical ways. By examining assessment through a social justice lens, the overall intent is to generate, interpret, and share data that more fairly reflect what language learners, and particularly English Language Learners (ELLs), can do.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

This edition of *Assessing English Language Learners* presents information about assessment and provides numerous examples of assessment strategies in eight chapters. The major updates reflect (a) the growing recognition of academic language as central to both language development and conceptual development, and therefore to assessment as well; (b) the increased role of technology in our lives and assessment; (c) the broadening of literacy to include multiliteracies and its measurement in authentic ways; (d) the influence of academic content standards, including college and career readiness standards and their facsimile on curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and (e) the emphasis on the important roles of students, teachers, and school leaders in the design and implementation of classroom or instructional assessment. Unless we provide all students opportunities and equitable access to standards-referenced, technology-driven curriculum, instruction, and assessment, these lofty twenty-first-century goals will not become a reality.

Part I sets the backdrop and rationale for a new vision of assessment. Chapter 1, *Assessment of English Language Learners: The Bridge to Educational Equity*, paints the current assessment landscape by identifying its key players—the students and their teachers. Working from the premise that all students are language learners who are in the process of acquiring grade-level academic language, this chapter outlines the

purposes of assessment for a variety of stakeholders, describes a comprehensive assessment model, and suggests that without linguistically and culturally responsive schools, assessment data cannot be relevant for the new majority—our minority students. Chapter 2, *Assessment of Academic Language Through Standards: The Bridge to Systemic Equity*, discusses the influence of content and language standards in shaping curriculum, instruction, and assessment. It explains how multiple sets of standards, representing expectations for learning, work together to promote academic success for students.

The midsection of the book addresses how language learners and their teachers are to be involved in all forms of assessment within and across classrooms. Chapter 3, *Assessment of the Language of the Content Areas: The Bridge to Academic Equity*, offers assessment ideas related to key uses of academic language in the core curricular areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Chapter 4, *Assessment of Oral Language and Literacy Development: The Bridge to Linguistic Equity*, speaks to the expansion of performance activities, tasks, and projects within and across listening, speaking, reading, and writing, including multiliteracies and translinguistic transfer, or translanguaging, as part of meaning making and communication for language learners.

Part II introduces a relatively new paradigm in assessment in the United States that speaks to students, teachers, and administrators—assessment *as, for, and of* learning. The comprehensive, standards-referenced model points to the relationship among three approaches and six forms of assessment. Chapter 5, *Assessment as Learning: The Bridge to Student Equity*, focuses on the voice of learners and how, through self-assessment and reflection, our students contribute to and help shape the assessment process. Student agency and advocacy demonstrated in assessment *as learning* frames this and the remaining chapters. Chapter 6, *Assessment for Learning: The Bridge to Teacher Equity*, illustrates how classroom teachers, by carefully planning and enacting an assessment process, can contribute sound evidence for standards-referenced decision making. Chapter 7, *Assessment of Learning: The Bridge to Administrator Equity*, points to the shifts in testing since the onset of college and career readiness standards and their impact on the new generation of assessment. The last chapter, *Assessment Results: Feedback, Standards-referenced Grading, and Reporting: The Bridge to Sustained Educational Equity*, summarizes how documentation of assessment *as, for, and of* learning within a standards-referenced system can yield rich results for educators, students, and family members, especially when supported through student-led conferences and assessment portfolios.

Reflections are interspersed throughout the chapters (consider *Reflections* as embedded self- and peer assessment or assessment *as learning* for yourself and your colleagues). They offer opportunities for you, either individually or as a member of a grade, department, or professional learning team, to grapple with some of the issues surrounding the instruction and assessment of language learners and evaluate the potential use of these ideas in your setting. *Resources* extend chapters by providing forms, surveys, and rubrics as well as support materials for instruction and assessment. Many of these exemplars have been adapted from the *Academic Language in Diverse Classrooms* series (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2013, 2014a, and 2014b) and are meant to inspire thoughts on how best to approach classroom-embedded or instructional assessment. In addition to the expanded *References* section, there is an extensive *Glossary* of words and expressions.

AUDIENCES

A broad range of audiences will hopefully find this book useful. First and foremost are teachers—each and every teacher who works with language learners, particularly ELLs, now or in the future. Potential teachers who will soon enter linguistically and culturally rich classrooms will also hopefully see the benefits of examining assessment through an equity lens. School leaders, such as counselors, program directors, and curriculum coordinators, can find some ideas for supporting valid assessment for students, especially ELLs and ELLs with learning disabilities. Preservice and in-service teacher educators, whether working for a school district or university or independently, can use this updated edition in a hybrid course, with a professional learning community, or in a traditional face-to-face venue.

As schools move to more collaborative models for instructional planning and delivery, we would encourage individual educators to pair with other professionals to delve deeper into issues related to assessing language learners. There are a number of ways that professional learning can be a springboard for teachers to work with other teachers as critical friends, thought partners, coaches, or mentors. Hopefully this book will spur collaboration among grade-level team members or content and language teachers within and across departments.

Bridges are the pathways that lead to equity and, subsequently, educational success for all students, in particular ELLs. The accomplishments of current and future generations of students rest on teachers forging new ground today. *Assessing English Language Learners* provides teachers and teacher educators with the motivation, ideas, and tools to cross those bridges.