
Preface

This book is meant to help K–12 teachers assess verbal learning without external tests, by their own observations of learner activities and products. Now that the destructive nature of standardized tests has been well documented and recognized, especially in the individualized, interactive, and integrated programs advocated today, it becomes more important than ever for teachers to learn how to detect growth constantly as they witness students discussing or performing, read or hear their writing, watch or listen to their tapes, listen in on or sit in with groups, confer with individuals, and register individuals' patterns of choice in their activities, materials, and partners.

Since particular observations are infinite, all I can do here is suggest some general signs of growth to look for, or perhaps more accurately, some general ways of looking. I trust teachers' experience and native perception to fill in a great deal. The world of verbal learning is so large and intricate, however, that some developmentally significant ways of breaking it down and conceptualizing it should prove useful. To facilitate getting a mental handle on these ways of viewing growth, I have crystallized the discussion of each in a culminating sentence. So some two dozen of these boldfaced "growth sequences" periodically pull together the text.

Personal judgment may be subjective, as it has to be for assessing verbal growth, but it can be informed by teachers' cumulative experience with many different learners if thought about in the framework of ideas that follow here.