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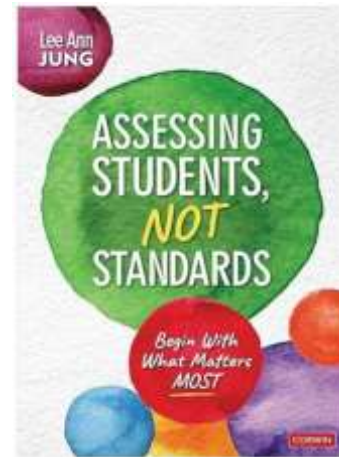
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Jung, L. A. (2024). *Assessing Students, Not Standards: Begin with What Matters Most*. Corwin.

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In a measured, candid, and conversational tone, Lee Ann Jung guides educators through the essential elements of *Assessing Students, Not Standards: Begin with What Matters Most*. The author states her purpose explicitly: "... the aim of this book [is] to take us through the right elements of change in assessment and grading, in the right order, at the right pace, and rooted in the science of change" (p. 4). Jung is a former K-12 special education teacher who currently is a Professor of Practice at San Diego State University. She identifies as an "inclusive educator," specializing in Universal Design for Learning (UDL), student goal setting, and inclusion.

The book appears at the peak of standards-based grading reform, designed to motivate educators to reflect on their practices and continue to change and grow. It is useful for school leaders, teachers, or teams who have already been in the standards-based grading (SBG) trenches and are looking to improve practice. The author presents her case in four key sections: 1) Purpose and Culture, 2) Priorities, 3) Assessment Practices, and 4) Grading Practices. Jung also includes a conceptual framework for grading reform; this is presented using concentric circles with five elements listed in an order best suited to support that reform: broad transfer, content transfer, content specific, assessment, and, at the core, grading.

Jung pulls from the ideas of Carol Dweck's *Mindset* (2006) and Todd Rose's *The End of Average* (2016) as she creates a foundation for a new way of thinking about standards-based grading. She asserts, "Assessment, done well, *is* teaching. It *is* learning" (p. 33). The text is accessible to educators familiar with the jargon around standards-based grading. It will resonate deeply with those working toward these ideals in their schools and school systems.

"Understanding how to separate *what* we assess from *how* we assess is necessary for accessibility, equity, and even measurement validity" (p. 97). Jung argues that to remove threats to validity, students must be given choices about how to demonstrate

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their learning. She emphasizes the difference between assessing and grading, reminding educators that “having a valid assessment is what we depend on for making decisions about our instruction.” (p. 117). Throughout the text, Jung focuses on student-forward practices aligned with assessment (e.g., conferences, self-assessment, success criteria, and feedback). These practices, Jung asserts, will lead to a more robust and valid assessment experience for students and should be thought of before, and separate from, grading.

For educators who may be relatively new to many of these SBG concepts, Jung also offers concrete “Tools to Use” and anecdotes “From the Classroom” to provide context for her ideas. The author models metacognition practices with a focus on the learner. For example, at the end of a chapter on assessment practices, Jung provides a checklist for educators to rate themselves using a five-point scale and several “I can” statements aligned to the chapter (e.g. “I can identify potential threats to validity in my assessments”). Jung also provides a space for the reader to reflect, asking “How comfortable am I with giving options for assessment to my students? Does this feel overwhelming, exciting, or both?” (p. 116). The reader is then given space to write a response.

Jung’s final section of the text includes the most procedural chapter, “How Not to Grade.” Here, Jung explains the harms associated with traditional grading practices. This section is placed appropriately, but the straightforward tone may be off-putting to someone using traditional grading practices. It is good that these chapters are at the end, for if presented earlier they may stop a reader from continuing altogether. Jung believes that “Assessment reform, not grading reform, is the real change schools need,” but the tone of her concluding chapters may stop an inquiring educator from participating in the needed assessment reform (p. 91).

Educators open to their own growth and learning progressions may move toward standards-based grading, assessment reform, or single-point rubrics, all under Jung’s careful supervision and guidance. The periodic learning checks in each section show readers which steps to take to improve their practices and adopt a more student-centered assessment approach.

Content, including index, glossary, and bibliography are extensive and detailed. Many of the texts she references are part of the SBG canon, from Tom Schimmer’s *Grading From The Inside Out* (2016) to Robert Marzano’s *Formative Assessment and Standards-Based Grading: Classroom Strategies That Work* (2010). Overall, Jung leads readers through a compelling history of the standards-based grading movement and offers insight into how systems can still shift and improve with students at the center.

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About the Reviewer



Krystle Bassett is a joyful promoter of personalized learning, edtech integration, and competency-based professional learning. Bassett has helped teachers innovate, create, and incorporate research-based best practices in their classrooms for 18 years. She currently works as Vice-Principal at Juab High School in Nephi, Utah. Bassett has an #englishteacherheart and is the steward of two Little Free Libraries in Juab County. She also serves as a member of the Utah State Charter School Board. Krystle and her husband Blaine reside in Nephi, Utah, with their four children. She is a graduate of Westminster College and Utah State University, where she is currently pursuing an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction.



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