

“I think I’m a good reader, but I guess I’m not, since I got put in that class.” The intended and unintended consequences of reading assessment and intervention: An Institutional Ethnography

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ABSTRACT

This Institutional Ethnography presents research gathered through interviews with administrators, teachers and students involved in the giving, taking and using of reading assessments to place students in junior high reading intervention. A strong commitment to standardized testing in America and a belief in literacy as the most important skill to be learned in schools has led to an increased focus in literacy assessment and intervention. In analysis of interviews with over 55 individuals impacted by testing in one district, conversations reveal the role that power plays in the ongoing high stakes assessing of readers and the placement of them in classes meant to "fix" their "deficiencies." Findings reveal that these fixes often do more harm than good creating stigma and lost opportunities for students, extra stress for teachers and a disconnect between belief and practice. Radical rethinking how we value and assess all learners in school could lead to better outcomes for individuals, schools and society.