Fundamentals of Reading Assessment

Assessment is the process of asking questions about students' reading skills and gathering information to answer those questions.

Assessment materials and tools should be selected based on the assessment purpose or question that needs to be answered about the student(s).

Purposes of Assessment

The fundamental purpose of assessment is to improve reading outcomes. School-wide literacy models, such as MTSS, include assessments for four purposes:

Purpose	Question	Who	When	Characteristics	Example
Screening	Who is at risk?	All students	3 x / year	• Brief • Standardized • Reliable and valid • Predictive • indicators	Acadience Reading K-6
Diagnostic	Why is the student at risk? What should be done about it?	Students who are at risk and students who are not progressing	Once a year	• In-depth, specific and thorough • Linked to instruction	Acadience Reading Diagnostics Really Great Reading Decoding Survey
Progress Monitoring	Is the instruction or intervention working, or should instruction be changed?	Students whose instruction has been changed	Monthly, Bi-Weekly or Weekly	• Brief • Standardized • Reliable and valid • Indicators • Sensitive to growth	Acadience Reading K-6
Outcome Evaluation	Did students meet grade level expectations	All students	Once a year	• Group administered • Standardized • Reliable and valid • Tests grade-level expectations	Terra Nova, Iowa Test of Basic Skills

Assessment Terms

Standardized refers to the way a test is given and scored, and can include:
- Scripted directions
- Scripted prompts
- Standardized timing
- Standardized scoring

It is important for each student to have standardized testing conditions if their score will be compared to other students or to an absolute criterion.

Tests that are not standardized are often referred to as informal. Examples include Informal Reading Inventories, running records, and the DRA. These tests are often be untimed and involve more subjectivity in administration and scoring.

Scores from standardized tests can be interpreted in a norm-referenced or criterion-referenced way (see below).

> **Accommodations** are changes to the standardized procedures.
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> **Approved accommodations** are minor alterations to the standardized procedures for giving the test. Scores derived under testing conditions with approved accommodations can still be compared to test norms or benchmark goals.
>
> **Unapproved accommodations** are major alterations to the standardized procedures. Scores derived under testing conditions with unapproved accommodations should not be compared to test norms, benchmark goals, or other students. The testing experience and resulting scores would be for the assessor's information only.

Reliability = The extent to which the same score is generated over time, across forms, and when different people give the test.
- Reported as a correlation coefficient
- Should be .90 or higher

Validity = The extent to which the score represents the construct the test is supposed to measure.
- Reported as a correlation coefficient
- Tests are valid for specific purposes (screening, diagnostic etc.), not generally valid
- Tests can't be valid unless they are reliable
- Should be .80 or higher for screening decisions and .90 or higher for diagnostic decisions

Computer Adaptive tests are not standardized. The items students are given depend on their response to previous items – harder items are given if the student responds correctly, easier

items are given after incorrect responses. Because these tests is not standardized, students do not take the same test items and therefore statistical procedures have to be applied after the students take the test so the scores can be compared.

Assessment Manual

Every test has an assessment manual that describes the standardized administration and scoring procedures, and summarizes the reliability and validity of the test. Assessors should read the assessment manual before giving a test, and refer to it for interpreting a test.

Assessment Conditions

The testing environment should be conducive to maximizing student performance. It is important for the testing location to be quiet and as free from distractions as possible.

Interpreting Test Scores

Test scores can be interpreted in at least two ways:

> **Norm-Referenced** interpretation involves comparing an individual's score to others who are the same age or grade. This interpretation should be used when it is important to compare an individual to others.
>
> > Examples of norm-referenced tests include the SAT/ACT, Woodcock Reading Mastery, CTOPP-2, and state accountability tests in grade 3 and above.
>
> **Criterion-Referenced** interpretation involves comparing an individual's score to an absolute standard that predicts reaching a criterion in the future. This interpretation is especially useful for reading screening measures that identify the minimal level of performance at one point in time that predicts performance in the future.
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> > Examples of criterion-referenced tests include Acadience Reading K-6, Aimsweb, and FastBridge.

Resources

National Center on Intensive Intervention Tools Charts

https://intensiveintervention.org/about-charts-resources

YouTube Video on Purposes of Assessment

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUc-bzxKm24