RIVIER UNIVERSITY

**DIVISION OF EDUCATION**

# **SPECIALIST IN THE ASSESSMENT OF INTELLECTUAL FUNCTIONING PROGRAM**

AND

**ASSOCIATION OF SPECIALISTS IN ASSESSMENT OF**

**INTELLECTUAL FUNCTIONING (ASAIF)**

[**http://www.asaif.net**](http://www.asaif.net)

**Comments on Reports 9/3/14 # 251**

**CONTENT**

**Referral meetings.**  Planning is so important that people are beginning to indulge in "preplanning," which I suppose is better than "postplanning" after the fact. One activity we often do not plan is evaluations. In some cases teams simply "refer" the student to various evaluators and hope for the best. (I have attended meetings in which the psychologist, the SAIF, and the speech-language pathologist have all administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test or the SAIF and occupational therapist have both administered the Developmental Test of Visual Perception and the psychologist used the Bender.) In other cases, somebody, often with more authority than expertise, assigns specific tests to the evaluators so, for example, you find yourself required to administer the Woodcock-Johnson to investigate problems with reading comprehension of entire chapters or written organization of long essays or the WISC-IV to diagnose a possible weakness in auditory perception and phonological awareness. (After working hard to learn to choose between the 1949 WISC and 1960 Stanford-Binet L-M for each referral, I admit I resent being told which tests to use.)

"Proper planning and preparation prevent piddle poor performance" (the 7 P's). At first blush, planning an evaluation seems to chew up a lot of time, but failure to plan will waste the entire effort. Someone in the group needs to prepare a thorough history, including a careful, complete file review and interviews with parents and teachers and perhaps the student (that interview will be needed sooner or later). Especially with RTI, little or no formal testing may be needed for some students after we have thoughtfully considered the history. For some questions, observations may be essential and testing irrelevant. In some instances, the historical information and interview results may lead to questions that can be answered by carefully planned testing, keeping in mind that tests are not interchangeable, but vary widely in abilities assessed and in task demands. For example, untimed tests do not assess fluency (but may reveal deficient basic skills that contribute to or are the cause of slow speed). Tests with very brief items do not tell us about reading or writing of long passages (but may again uncover weak basic skills that impair sustained reading comprehension or writing of long passages). If we want to compare basic skills, academic applications, and academic fluency across reading, writing, and math domains, we should use a test that makes those comparisons (the WJ III and WJ IV come to mind). Multiple-choice tests do not tell us much about oral or written expression, but might be ideal for testing other skills in a student with weak oral expression. Most tests are subject, to varying degrees, to the Princess Summerfall-winterspring Effect\*, but the Woodcock-Johnsons are not because norms are based on one-month intervals, not spans of 3, 4, 6, 12 or more months. That issue could be very important for some students, especially younger ones.

It is worth the effort to elicit specific referral questions from parents, teachers, specialists, and the student. I like to type the questions into the report, copy and paste them into the conclusions section, and address each one (even if I must admit I simply don't know). As teachers learn that you respond to their referral questions, they may begin to ask more and better questions.

If your school will not support such planning, you can get together with fellow targets of the referral and do some informal planning with each other and share unexpected results during your evaluations. At least you won't all give the PPVT-4 to the same child.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\* One more problem with measuring progress with individually administered achievement tests is what Ron Dumont and I call the Princess Summerfallwinterspring Effect. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlRKmAMrK8s>

Grade-based norms for achievement tests are generally seasonal, usually Fall-Spring or Fall-Winter-Spring.  (Exceptions include the WJ III and WJ IV with norms at one-month intervals and, at the opposite extreme, a few tests that offer only whole-year norms as if students were not expected to make any progress at all throughout the school year.)  Suppose, for instance, that Ecomodine was tested with the WIAT-III Math Problem-Solving subtest near the end of winter and the beginning of mud season in grades 2 and 3.

**GRADE TWO                          GRADE THREE**

**2/28         3/1                               2/28        3/1**

 raw     standard  standard           raw      standard  standard

score      score       score            score        score       score               GAIN

  29           75                                35                           76                 1 point

  29                          71                 35            79                                8 points!

 What a difference a day makes.

 There must be a problem with the WIAT-III.  Let's try the KTEA-II Form B Math Concepts and Applications.

**GRADE TWO                        GRADE THREE**

**1/31       2/1                               1/31         2/1**

 raw     standard  standard           raw      standard  standard

score      score       score            score        score       score               GAIN

  24           75                                33                           75                      0

  24                          70                 33            79                                9 points!

 A day still makes a big difference.  Ecomodine clearly made significant progress or none at all.

Be sure to visit <http://www.dsm5.org/Pages/Default.aspx> for DSM-5 updates and corrections. Click on [**IMPORTANT NOTICE: CODING UPDATES FOR DSM-5:**](http://dsm.psychiatryonline.org/DSM5CodingSupplement) **UPDATED 3/24/14** to download a pdf file of the March 2014 *DSM-5 Coding Update Supplement to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.) and to sign up for email updates. Be the first kid on the block to have the corrected code for your supervisor. Of particular interest to special educators are coding changes for Intellectual Disability, Language Disorder, Bipolar Disorders, Selective Mutism, Trichotillomania, Adjustment Disorders, Insomnia and Hypersomnia Disorders, Kleptomania, and various Neurocognitive Disorders.

**Reminder**: "The **National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)** has provided information and resources to the nation on disabilities in children and youth for many decades. On September 30, 2013, however, our funding from the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education ended.  This rich website and all its free resources **will remain available until September 30, 2014**. We encourage you to explore our website and collect any resources that may assist you in serving children and youth with disabilities."  Go to <http://nichcy.org/> and start stockpiling their materials! You will be too busy in September. Guy McBride is collecting some of the material at his, Ron Dumont's and my <http://www.myschoolpsychology.com>, but you will want to select and save information of special interest to you. Do it now!

It is easy (and therefore popular) to begin an evaluation summary by writing something like, **"Ecomodine's highest WISC-IV score was Similarities and her lowest score was Coding."** Why should we seldom write such statements? Let me count the ways.

1. Subtests have lower reliabilities than index, cluster, and composite scores and the Full Scale IQ, GCA, GIA, CIX, etc. Individual subtest scores are the last place to look for trustworthy, useful information (in fact, idiosyncratic responses to single items might be more revealing in some instances than scores for single subtests).

2. Maybe there were no significant differences between Ecomodine's subtest scores and her mean subtest score, and there were no significant differences within Verbal Comprehension or Processing Speed. Her scatter (difference between highest and lowest subtest scores) had base rates of about 75% for FSIQ, VCI, and PSI. As all SAIFs can recite in their sleep, "Non-significant differences are not differences at all."

3. Maybe Ecomodine's Similarities score was 13, but her Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Information scores were all 12. Her Coding score was 8, but her Symbol Search and Destroy and Cancellation scores were 9. The important difference was between the Verbal Comprehension Index and the Processing Speed index, not between the two subtests.

4. And, in any case, what would be the useful implications of that information about the two subtests?

5. The first caveat of writing reports is that readers will strive mightily to attach significant meaning to anything we write in the report. The second caveat is that readers will focus particularly on statements and numbers that are unimportant, potentially misleading, or – whenever possible – both. This is the voice of bitter experience.

**NEW TESTS**

*Poverty is the only thing money cannot buy.* – Diogenes of Sinope

What a year for evaluators who purchase our own tests and for administrators budgeting for assessment supplies! Like faculties who all assign huge papers and projects to students the same weekend, the test publishers have engaged in an orgy of procreating revised editions of tests. The following revisions are the ones that have come to and remained in my limited attention.

* Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals—Fifth Edition <http://www.pearsonclinical.com/psychology/products/100000705/clinical-evaluation-of-language-fundamentals-fifth-edition-celf-5.html>
* Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals—Fifth Edition Metalinguistics (CELF-5 Metalinguistics) (a revision of the Test of Language Competence-Expanded) <http://www.pearsonclinical.com/talent/products/100000783/clinical-evaluation-of-language-fundamentals-fifth-edition-metalinguistics-celf-5-metalinguistics.html>
* Cognitive Assessment System—Second Edition (CAS2) (apparently no hyphen) <http://www.proedinc.com/customer/productView.aspx?ID=6768>
* Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing—Second Edition (CTOPP-2) <http://www.proedinc.com/customer/productview.aspx?id=5187>
* Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Third Edition (KTEA-3). <http://www.pearsonclinical.com/education/products/100000777/kaufman-test-of-educational-achievement-third-edition-ktea-3.html>
* Leiter-3 <http://www.stoeltingco.com/psychologicaltesting/intellectual-cognititve/nonverbal/leiter-3-kit-in-rolling-backpack.html> <http://www4.parinc.com/products/Product.aspx?ProductID=LEITER-3> [www.r4pd.wikispaces.com/file/view/**Leiter**-**3**+Training+Power+Point.pptx](http://www.r4pd.wikispaces.com/file/view/Leiter-3+Training+Power+Point.pptx)
* Pearson Q-global <http://images.pearsonclinical.com/images/qglobal/>
* Pearson Q-interactive <http://www.helloq.com/home.html>
* Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—Fifth Edition (WISC-V) <http://wiscv.com/> <http://downloads.pearsonclinical.com/videos/WISC-V-02062014/WISC-VWebinarHandout02062014.pdf>
* Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence—Fourth Edition (WPPSI-IV) <http://images.pearsonclinical.com/images/Products/WPPSI-IV/brochure.pdf>
* Woodcock-Johnson IV (WoJoFo) <http://www.riversidepublishing.com/products/wj-iv/>

Authors and editors are hard at work on many new *Essentials* books for Wiley and new *Scientist-Practitioner Perspectives* books for Academic Press (Elsevier). Our financial contributions to publishers of tests and texts should finally restore the U.S. economy.

**How Soon Must we Purchase New Editions of Tests?** (repeated from #250 but timely)

This issue has been discussed from time to time over the years on the NASP (now School Psychology) listserv (<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/School-Psychology-Listserv/info>).  There is no legal rule, although I would not want to take a report based on an obsolete test into a hearing against an aggressive attorney and a sharp expert witness. The most common recommendation is approximately one year, which is arbitrary but, in my opinion, reasonable.  Ron Dumont warns us not to be beta testers for new editions.  Let someone else find the bugs and then you can buy the second printing.   Even with excellent development efforts by the publishers, problems are likely to be found once hundreds of evaluators administer a new edition a few thousand times.  Also better interpretations can be based on published research on the new edition.

Occasionally, a new edition will be a step backward (*farpotchket*).  For example, in my personal opinion, the DTLA-3 was vastly inferior to the DTLA-2 and the DTLA-4.

One factor is the age of the previous edition.  In the old days, when an edition was used for decades, you had a huge Flynn Effect on intelligence tests and all kinds of complicated effects on achievement tests (seen, for example when the WRMT-R, PIAT-R, KeyMath, and KTEA were renormed in 1998 compared to the 2007 renorming of the WJ III).  Often the time lapses were so long that the state of the art of test development improved significantly between editions.  For example, when the WISC-R finally came out in 1974, users of the 1949 WISC (including me) really had to change horses quickly.  We were not in midstream; we were deep in the desert beyond the far bank.

Another factor is the question of whether the new edition solves an important problem with the old edition.  For example, the OWLS was a three-legged table with listening comprehension, oral expression, and written expression.  The OWLS-II added the missing fourth leg: reading comprehension.  That was sufficient improvement to motivate me to make a quicker switch (after waiting briefly for others to beta test the new edition and scream about any problems).

Yet another factor is your test usage. If, for example, you use both the DAS-II and WISC-IV for similar purposes or both the WIAT-III and KTEA-II for similar purposes, you might hold off on purchasing a new edition of one test from either pair. However, if the differences between the two tests in a pair lead you to carefully and thoughtfully select one or the other for each referred examinee (which is, of course, best practice), owning one will not save you from updating the other. If you or your district uses a particular test only a few times a year, you might want to share a new edition with another evaluator or another district.

So: more or less one year or school-district budget cycle with certain exceptions is a good and common rule of thumb, but it is not obligatory.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Flynn, J. R. (1984). The mean IQ of Americans: Massive gains 1932 to 1978. *Psychological Bulletin, 95*, 29-51.

Flynn, J. R. (1987). Massive IQ gains in 14 nations: What IQ tests really measure. *Psychological Bulletin, 101*, 171-191.

Flynn, J. R. (1998). IQ gains over time: Toward finding the causes. In U. Neisser (Ed.), *The rising curve: Long-term gains in IQ and related measures* (pp. 25-66). Washington: American Psychological Association.

Flynn, J. R. (2010). Problems with IQ gains: The huge vocabulary gap. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment 28*(5), 412-433. doi:10.1177/0734282910373342

Kaufman, A. S. (2010). "In what way are apples and oranges alike?" A critique of Flynn's interpretation of the Flynn Effect. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 28*(5) 382-398 doi: 10.1177/0734282910373346

Kaufman, A. S., & Weiss, L. G. (2010). Guest Editors’ introduction to the special issue of JPA on the Flynn Effect. Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 28(5): 379-381 doi: 10.1177/0734282910373344

McGrew, K. S., Dailey, D. E. H., & Schrank, F. A. (2007). *Woodcock-Johnson III/Woodcock-Johnson III Normative Update Score Differences: What the User Can Expect and Why* (Woodcock-Johnson III Assessment Service Bulletin No. 9). Rolling Meadows, IL: Riverside Publishing. <http://www.riverpub.com/products/wjIIIComplete/pdf/WJIII_ASB9.pdf>

Pae, H. K., Wise, J. C., Cirino, P. T., Sevcik, R. A., Lovett, M.W., Wolf, M., & and Morris, R. D. (2005). The Woodcock Reading Mastery Test: Impact of normative changes. *Assessment 12*, 347-357. doi: 10.1177/1073191105277006

**STYLE**

Don’t write merely to be understood. Write so that you cannot possibly be misunderstood.

– Robert Louis Stevenson

The whole point of **fluency tests** on normed assessments is to measure speed of accurately (or reasonably accurately) performing relatively easy tasks, such as transcribing a digit-symbol code with the code in plain view, finding matching symbols in neatly printed rows of symbols on a page, finding the great number in each row of one-, two-, or three-digit numbers, reading grade-level passages or lists of words aloud, or performing single-digit math computations. (More complex tasks can be used for timed curriculum-based assessment (CBM) probes employed in Response to Intervention (RtI), but that is another story. See, for example, <http://www.interventioncentral.org/>.) When we are reporting the results of simple fluency tests, it is important to emphasize the speed issue. I think it is better, for example, to describe, the KTEA-II Reading Fluency as "speed of reading lists of words aloud" than merely as "reading words aloud quickly." Mentioning accuracy (unless it is dramatically poor; I wish that WISC-IV Coding and various academic fluency tests had base-rate norms for accuracy) just confuses the reader. I recall a superb WJ III workshop by Nancy Mather during which one participant complained that fluency tests were unfair to her students with cerebral palsy and that the time limits should be waived for them. The participant just could not get the idea that, in that case, her students would ace the fluency tests and might be found ineligible for special education. I know I have whined about this issue before, but it keeps recrudescing in the reports I see: "Mordred's score for Decoding Fluency was 57 (percentile rank 1). He read slowly, but very accurately." Wording like that just further encourages thoughtless teams to ignore Reading Fluency as one of the qualifying achievement areas for Specific Learning Disability under the IDEA.

**LAW**

See <http://www.myschoolpsychology.com/spedlaw-blog/> and <http://www.myschoolpsychology.com/federal-regulations/> for updates/

**URLS**

I am no longer updating my clunky, old Word list of sped-related URLs because Guy McBride is constantly updating our on-line version, which began with my old Word list, but has expanded far beyond it: <http://www.myschoolpsychology.com/sped-links-2/>. Suggestions are welcome.

The New Hampshire Association of School Psychologists web page has been updated and merits a visit: <http://www.nhaspweb.org/>

**BOOKS AND ARTICLES**

*Best Practices in School Psychology* is now a four-volume set of paperbacks:

Harrison, P. L., & Thomas, A. (Eds.) (2014). *Best practices in school psychology: Data-based and collaborative decision making.* Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Harrison, P. L., & Thomas, A. (Eds.) (2014). *Best practices in school psychology: Foundations.* Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Harrison, P. L., & Thomas, A. (Eds.) (2014). *Best practices in school psychology: Student-level services.* Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Harrison, P. L., & Thomas, A. (Eds.) (2014). *Best practices in school psychology: Systems-level services.* Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

<http://www.nasponline.org/publications/booksproducts/N1405.aspx> We can purchase single volumes or the whole set. NASP plans to offer a tablet version of these books this fall. There are two truly outstanding chapters and many excellent ones. Special introductory prices: **Member**: ~~$319~~  **$289** **Nonmember**:$399 **Volume Orders** (7 or more)**:**~~$299~~  **$270**. Good deal for seven or more special education administrators to get one set for each of their SAUs.

**The new edition of *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* has just been released*.*** *"Standards*is a joint product of the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). Published collaboratively by the three organizations since 1966, it represents the gold standard in guidance on testing in the United States and worldwide. The current edition of *Standards* was published in 1999. In the past 15 years, important developments have occurred in the field of testing, requiring significant revision to *Standards*. Five areas, in particular, receive attention in the 2014 revision:

* Examining the accountability issues for the uses of tests in educational policy
* Broadening the concept of accessibility of tests for all examinees
* Representing more comprehensively the role of tests in the workplace
* Taking into account the expanding role of technology in testing
* Improving the structure of the book for better communication of the standards."

Be the second kid on your block to get a copy (I just sent for one) for $49.95 for AERA, APA, and NCME members; $69.95 for the rest of us; $7 shipping and handling. "An e-version of the Testing Standards will be available for purchase in fall 2014." ISBN 0- 935302 - 35 – 6 <http://www.aera.net/default.aspx> or <http://www.aera.net/Publications/Books/StandardsforEducationalPsychologicalTesting(2014Edition)/tabid/15578/Default.aspx>.

John O. Willis

Adjunct Senior Lecturer in Assessment,

Rivier University

Assessment Specialist,

Regional Services and Education Center

Sand Hill Road. Peterborough, NH 03458-1616

(603) 924-0993 [johnzerowillis@yahoo.com](mailto:johnzerowillis@yahoo.com)

This newsletter goes out intermittently to about 400 people on eleven separate lists (because some mailboxes won't accept mailings to more than 49 recipients). If you wish to contact the entire list, not just your 1/11 of it, please send the message to me, and I will add it (subject to Comstock, Hays, Children's Internet Protection Act, HIPAA, FERPA, copyright, and Homeland Security considerations) to the next mailing. If you wish to be protected from receiving future copies, just email me at [johnzerowillis@yahoo.com](mailto:johnzerowillis@yahoo.com). Same address to subscribe for free.