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 10/5/16 # 259**

If you are reading a bootleg version of this newsletter and wish to receive your own free copies, email me at johnzerowillis@yahoo.com. Back issues newsletter are archived at the ASAIF Website under "Reports" and at <http://www.myschoolpsychology.com/johns-blog-2/>. The ASAIF Website also includes opinion columns, such as "Have a WRAT for Lunch," and information on ASAIF workshops. The [www.myschoolpsychology](http://www.myschoolpsychology) site includes legal information from Guy McBride and assessment information from Ron Dumont as well as special education links and other information.

**CONTENT**

I just heard about VocaliD on NH Public Radio. <https://www.vocalid.co/> They create synthesized speech for persons who cannot talk. They use speech samples from volunteers and, if possible, voice samples (such as a vowel sound) from the person for whom the voice is being created to create natural sounding machine voices that match the age and gender of the person who cannot speak. With their programs, a ten-year-old girl does not have to sound like Stephen Hawking. Dr. Hawking would not need to, either, if he used the service. On the unlikely assumption that anyone would want my voice, I plan to explore donating a voice sample. Please see also <http://blog.ted.com/everything-you-need-to-know-about-donating-your-voice-why-you-should-help-the-human-voicebank-initiative/>

**Something to consider when trying to reduce the number of special education students in your district.** <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/denied/?cmpid=hcael>

**Resources for Writing Reports.** There has been a recent discussion of English, how she are wrote on the NASP Member Exchange. The following resources were recommended.

Glazer, A. (2014). Effective oral communication of evaluation results. Communiqué, 42(6), 1, 32–33.

Lichtenstein, R. (2013a). Writing psychoeducational reports that matter: A consumer-responsive approach. Communiqué, 42(3), 1, 28–30.

Lichtenstein, R. (2013b). Writing psychoeducational reports that matter: A consumer-responsive approach, Part 2. Communiqué, 42(4), 1, 10–13.

Lichtenstein, R. (2014). Writing psychoeducational reports that matter: A consumer-responsive approach, Part 3. Communiqué, 42(6), 1, 30–32.

NASP members should be able to access these articles at <http://apps.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/periodicals/cq-index-list.aspx> (our membership dollars at work!).

Also:

Carriere, J. A., & Hass, M. (2014). *Writing useful, accessible, and legally defensible psychoeducational reports*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. [I have not seen this book, but it was enthusiastically recommended.]

Gordon, K. E. (1993). *The deluxe transitive vampire: The ultimate handbook of grammar for the innocent, the eager, and the doomed.* New York, NY: Pantheon. [Recommended to me by Elaine Holden. I love it.]

Mather, N., & Jaffe, L. E. (Eds.) (2010). C*omprehensive evaluations: Case reports for psychologists, diagnosticians, and special educators.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. [Fifty-eight sample evaluation reports with commentaries by the authors addressing a wide variety of disabilities and referral concerns. An invaluable resource for anyone writing psychological, neuropsychological, or educational evaluations.]

Sattler, J. M. (2008). Report writing. In J. M. Sattler, *Assessment of children: Cognitive foundations* (5th ed.) (pp. 704-758). San Diego, CA: Jerome M. Sattler, Publisher.

Sattler, J. M. (2014). Report writing. In J. M. Sattler, *Foundations of behavioral, social, and clinical assessment of children* (6th ed.) (pp. 695-732). San Diego, CA: Jerome M. Sattler, Publisher. [Slightly shorter, but more recent than Sattler (2008). Both are very helpful.]

Schneider, W. J., Mather, N., Lichtenberger, E. O., & Kaufman, N. L. (in preparation). Essentials of Assessment Report Writing(2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.  [I am saving my pennies to buy a copy as soon as it comes out.  My friendly, local, independent bookstore is great about pre-ordering for me.]

Walrath, R., Willis, J. O., & Dumont, R. (2014). Best practices in writing assessment reports. In A. Thomas & P. L. Harrison (Eds.), Best practices in school psychology: Data-based and collaborative decision making(pp. 433-445).Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists. (OK, I recommended this one.)

Joel Schneider recommended:

In preparing a forthcoming book which contains a chapter on this topic, I relied heavily on Helen Sword’s (2012) Stylish Academic Writing and Steven Pinker’s (2014) The Sense of Style.

In addition, William Strunk and E. B. White’s (1959/1979) classic The Elements of Style is still the most recommended book for those wanting to improve their writing.

For making documents appear professional, I am wildly enthusiastic about the freely available, wonderfully written, and aptly named book Practical Typography by Matthew Butterick, found at [practicaltypography.com](http://practicaltypography.com/). (I just looked. It is pretty cool!)

A concise and accessible general treatment of grammar can be found in Mignon Fogarty’s (2008) Grammar Girl’s Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing as well as her podcast of the same name. (She has web pages at <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl> among other places.)

Michael Drout’s audio course A Way with Words III: Understanding Grammar for Powerful Communication is a thorough and lively presentation of English grammar and nicely balances scholarly precision with practical flexibility.

For matters of punctuation, Eats, Shoots, and Leaves by Lynne Truss makes what could have been a dull topic entertaining and fun.

**Dealing or dispensing with statistics.** I create an appendix for each evaluation report with (1) an illustrated explanation of the test scores used with each test I inflicted on my victim.  I have a file with a brief definition of each score, a cute picture of the normal curve made with 200 ampersands (suggested by my former student, Mary Mikcucki because & looked like a side view of a child sitting on the floor), and a table row under the normal curve for each test statistic used.  When I delete all the definitions and table rows for tests I did not use and did not review in the History (I only occasionally use, for example, Bruininks-Oseretsky Scale Scores with a mean of 15 and s.d. of 5), the whole thing usually fits on one page.

(2) I have table shells for reporting lots and lots of different tests.  Again, I delete all the pages for tests I did not use and then fill in the score, 95% confidence band, percentile rank, and--sometimes--a verbal descriptor.  I have to decide whether to use verbal descriptors at all (some parents and teachers feel, for example, that "average" is just ducky and others consider the term a vile insult) and, if I do, which set of classification labels (e.g., Woodcock-Johnson, Wechsler, etc.) I will use for all of the tests.  I need, of course, to explain what I am doing and need to include in my table the classification labels provided with the various tests in the report, but I do not want, in the same report, to call a standard score of 110 High Average on the WISC-V, Above Average on the DAS-II, and Average on the WJ IV.

(3) I have accumulated thumbnail descriptions of many tests, including their subtests.  Once again, I delete all of the tests that I did not use or discuss in the history.  The final version of this appendix to the child's report runs about five to ten pages.

With the Appendix in place, I can then write my report with few or no scores at all and without long descriptions of the various tests embedded in the text of my report.  [Some description may still be needed for some subtests, such as "When she was asked to explain how three different words (such as *dog, horse,*and*lion* or *hope, fear,*and*love*) were all alike, Quathrynne carefully defined each word but, even with prompting and encouragement, never explained how they were related to each other."]  If, for some reason, I thought I needed to, of course I could rattle on about specific numerical scores and even copy and paste portions of my appendix tables into my report.

(4)  The first time I do refer to a particular statistic (often the first instance is in the Previous Testing section) I use a footnote to explain the statistic for the occasional reader who cares.  Readers who already know and the vast majority who do not care can skip the footnotes. Many people have read thousands of books without ever reading a footnote.  They seem to be happy, well-adjusted people for the most part.  Here are eight random examples.

1. This type of "standard score" has an average of 100.  On any one test, the middle half of people receive standard scores between 90 and 110.  Please see p. i of the Appendix to this report.

2. "T scores" have an average of 50.  On any one test, the middle half of people receive T scores between 47 and 53. Please see p. i of the Appendix to this report.

3. Bruininks-Oseretsky (BOT-2) subtest "Scale Scores" have an average of 15. On any one subtest, the middle half of people receive BOT-2 Scale Scores between 12 and 18. Please see p. i of the Appendix to this report.

4.  Percentile ranks tell the percentage of students who scored the same as Mordred or lower.  For example, a percentile rank of 36 means that Mordred scored as high as or higher than 36 percent of students his age and lower than the other 64 percent.   [*Note: I generally use for the example the student's test score that I am footnoting. This is the one footnote I am likely to use more than once (if I am reporting percentile ranks).  People really, really want to confuse "percentile rank" with "percent correct."  I also never, ever use "%" or "%ile" as an abbreviation for percentile rank. That symbol almost guarantees confusion with percent correct.  I spell out "percentile rank" or, if I must abbreviate, I use "PR."*]

5.  Scores can never be perfectly accurate, even on the very best tests. Lucky and unlucky guesses, narrowly beating or missing time limits, temporarily forgetting something you know perfectly well, and other random influences cause scores to vary.  This "95% confidence interval" shows how much scores are likely to vary 95 percent of the time, just be random variation.

6.  Scores can never be perfectly accurate, even on the very best tests, so differences between scores are also less than perfectly accurate.  In this report, a "significant difference" is one that is too great to occur just by random variation more than 5 times out of 100."  [*Note: I write "in this report" because reasonable people might prefer significance levels of .10 or .01.  I have even heard of people using p < .15!*]

7.  Even "significant differences" may not be uncommon.  Human abilities vary.  In this report, an "uncommon difference" is a significant difference that does not occur in more than 10 percent of people taking the test.

8.  I am using [*Woodcock-Johnson, stanine, WISC-V, or whatever you choose*] verbal classification labels for all of the scores in this report.  Different tests have different classification systems, so the same score might be called different things on different tests.  The classification schemes provided by the test publishers are shown on p. i of the Appendix to this report. [*So don't get your shorts in a knot.*]

I realize that footnote example 8 above is very upsetting to many people.  Their opinions are very important, just not to me.  I agree with Gale Roid, Susan Raiford, and James Holdnack:

"It is customary to break down the continuum of IQ test scores into categories. . . . other reasonable systems for dividing scores into qualitative levels do exist, and the choice of the dividing points between different categories is fairly arbitrary. It is also unreasonable to place too much importance on the particular label (e.g., "borderline impaired') used by different tests that measure the same construct (intelligence, verbal ability, and so on)." [Roid, G. H. (2003). *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales, Fifth Edition, Examiner's Manual*. Itasca, IL: Riverside, p. 150.]

"*Qualitative descriptors are only suggestions and are not evidence-based; alternate terms may be used as appropriate*" [emphasis in original]. [Wechsler, D. (WISC-V Research Directors, S. E. Raiford & J. A. Holdnack) (2014). *Wechsler intelligence scale for children*(5th ed.): *Technical and interpretive manual.*Bloomington, MN: Pearson, p. 152.]

I also realize that the sample footnotes are incomplete and, in some cases, not entirely correct.  You can find more complete information at

<http://www.myschoolpsychology.com/testing-information/statistics-test-scores-powerpoint/>

and

<http://www.myschoolpsychology.com/testing-information/sample-explanations-of-classification-labels/>

and you can find much more accurate information at, for example, Joel Scheider's wonderful web page <http://my.ilstu.edu/~wjschne/>

*A little inaccuracy saves a world of explanation. -- C. E. Ayres*

*A little inaccuracy sometimes saves a ton of explanation. -- H. H. Munro (Saki)*

If I refrain from using a lot of test scores in the report, I may not need many or any of these footnotes.  Except for the one about percentile ranks, I generally use each footnote only once, the first time I refer to the particular statistic.

**STYLE**

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

The difference between the almost right word and the right word is … the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.

 — Mark Twain

**Whatever happened to "as possible"?**  I used to hear and read sentences such as

 *We hope to improve Mordred's reading fluency as much as possible with increased tutoring.*

All of a sudden, I am hearing and reading sentences such as

 *We hope to improve Mordred's reading fluency as much with increased tutoring.*

Let's bring it back.

**Crystallized Intelligence** is one of the official Cattell-Horn-Carroll (CHC) names for *Gc.* For some reason, I find myself uncomfortable with the name. I fear that parents, teachers, administrators, attorneys, hearing officers, and judges may place undue emphasis on the use of the word "intelligence" for this CHC ability alone. The *Gf* and *Gv* and other abilities do not use the word "intelligence" in most of their popular names. I know the name is traditional (Cattell, 1941, 1963; Cattell & Horn, 1978), but I am not sure what people untrained in *Gf-Gc* and CHC theory are likely to make of the word "crystallized." I tend to write "verbal comprehension" or "verbal comprehension and knowledge."

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Cattell, R. B. (1941). Some theoretical issues in adult intelligence testing. *Psychological Bulletin, 38,* 592.

Cattell, R. B. (1963). Theory of fluid and crystallized intelligence: A critical experiment. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 54*, 1-22.

Cattell, R. B., & Horn, J. L. (1978). A check on the theory of fluid and crystallized intelligence with description of new subtest designs. *Journal of Educational Measurement, 15*, 139-164.

**Don't neglect the signpost words.** I still see a lot of reports in which the scores that are very similar to or very different from each other are simply reported in a mind-numbing list. We might do well to give the reader some guidance. Two examples follow.

*Mordred scored in the 84th percentile rank (as high as or higher than 84 percent of students his age) for defining words,* ***BUT ONLY*** *in the 16th percentile when he was asked how two different words (such as* cow *and* mule *or* hope *and* fear*) could be alike.* [I'd be inclined to relegate the Verbal Comprehension Index to the Appendix. It doesn't seem to add any useful information about Mordred. I would want to explore the reasons for the difference.]

*Ecomodine's scores for the nonverbal, picture and puzzle subtests* ***WERE ALL*** *higher than average for her age.* ***HOWEVER,*** *her scores on the oral, verbal subtests* ***WERE ALL*** *average or lower.* [I don't always see the need to list all of the subtest scores, which can be found in the Appendix by those who feel a need for them.]

***DESPITE*** *his High Average score for Listening Comprehension compared to student's his age on the listening task, Ralph's Reading Comprehension score was Below Average compared to other students his age on the reading task. Both subtests required Ralph to answer oral questions about short passages; the only difference was who did the reading.*

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