



Assessment Tools: Research and Application in an Extended Learning Program

by

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## PART I: THE PURPOSE

### Introduction

Attending an Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting and understanding the terminology can be a daunting task for all involved. IEP meetings can be confusing and overwhelming for classroom teachers. The confusion may be due to the terminology connected to assessment. I initiated this field project, entitled *Assessment Tools: Research and Application in an Extended Learning Classroom*, to address the issues connected with different assessments often discussed at IEP meetings. My intent was to become more comfortable with the use of the assessments and to decide which tools will be beneficial for an extended learning program at a Lutheran Elementary School (LES).

### Purpose of the Field Project

I wondered how learning about assessment tools would benefit an Extended Learning Classroom in a Lutheran Elementary School. I also pondered which tools might accurately assess the learning challenges of students, especially the younger students. Therefore, the purpose of this field project is to become familiar with, to gather information, and to determine the usefulness of a set of selected assessments. The tools were used in an Extended Learning Classroom, a special classroom for children in kindergarten through eighth grade. The tools were used with struggling learners and with students diagnosed with a learning disability (LD). The assessment tools were used to help determine the students' areas of strengths and weaknesses. Based upon the strengths and

weaknesses, goals were set to address curricular modifications. Ultimately, the assessment tools should be evaluated for their usefulness in the ELC.

### Definition of Terms

#### *Extended Learning Program or Extended Learning Classroom (ELP or ELC)*

An Extended Learning Program or Extended Learning Classroom is a classroom set up to help the struggling students in a small group or one-on-one instruction. Other names may be resource center, learning center, or remedial classroom (Lerner & Kline, 2006).

#### *Assessment tools*

Assessment tools are the testing materials that the public or private schools may use to test students to help determine whether or not a student has a learning disability (Learning Disabilities in Special Education, 2009).

#### *Formal assessments*

Formal assessments are commonly referred to as standardized measures. These tests are normed on a population of students. The statistics from the assessments are used to support conclusions about student achievement. The data is mathematically computed and summarized. Scores such as percentiles, stanines, or standard scores are reported for these types of assessments (Weaver, 2009).

#### *Informal assessments*

“Informal” is used here to indicate assessment techniques that can be incorporated into classroom routines and learning activities. Informal assessment techniques can be used at any time without interfering with instructional time.



Results are indicative of the student's performance on the skill or subject of interest. Unlike standardized tests, informal assessments are not intended to provide a comparison to a broader group (Lerner & Kline, 2006).

#### *Individualized Education Plan (IEPs)*

The term "individualized education program" means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised. The IEP includes statements about present levels of educational performance, measurable annual goals, special education and related services, and supplementary aids and services to be provided. Related to assessments, the IEP must include a statement of any individual modifications in the administration of state or district-wide assessments of student achievement (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 2002).

#### *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law (PL 101-476) enacted in 1990 and reauthorized in 1997 (PL105-17) and in 2004 (PL 108-446). The law is designed to protect the rights of students with disabilities by ensuring that everyone receives a *free appropriate public education (FAPE)*, regardless of ability. Furthermore, IDEA strives, not only to grant equal access to students with disabilities, but also to provide additional special education services and procedural safeguards (National Resource Center on ADHD, 2009).

#### *Norm Referenced Measures*

Norm-referenced tests are developed by creating the test items and then administering the test to a group of students who will be used as the basis of

comparison. Statistical methods are used to determine how raw scores will be interpreted and what performance levels are assigned to each score. Many tests yield standard scores that allow the comparison of the student's scores to other tests. Norm-referenced tests may be used to ascertain if a student's achievement score appears to be consistent with his cognitive score. The degree of difference between those two scores might suggest or rule out a learning disability (Logsdon, 2009).

### *Criterion-Referenced Measures (CRM)*

Criterion-referenced assessments measure how well a student performs against an objective or criterion rather than another student. Criterion-referenced classrooms are mastery-oriented, informing all students of the expected standard and teaching them to succeed on related outcome measures (Learning Technologies, 2009).

### *Reliability*

Reliability is the accuracy of the measuring instrument which produces the same results after repeated testing (Howell, et al., 2005).

### *Validity*

Validity assesses the success of a researcher's study at measuring a specific concept that the researcher set out to measure (Howell, et al., 2005).

### *Content Validity*

Content validity is based on the extent to which the content of the assessment corresponds with the domain of content (Howell, et al., 2005).

### *Concurrent Validity*

Concurrent validity is an agreement of the results between the evaluating instrument of measurement and the standard instrument when administered to the same group of people. The concurrent validity is often noted with a numerical value called the correlation coefficient (Statistical glossary, 2009).

## PART II: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

The primary purpose of this project is to gather information to determine the usefulness of selected assessment tools. To accomplish the field project, assessment tools need to be gathered, administered, and evaluated. The evaluation is accomplished on an individual basis by using six directed questions concerning each test. The intent is to use each assessment tool and to find the tools that would benefit students in an Extended Learning Classroom. Evaluating each assessment tool is done by assessing three children who are chosen for this project, and by consulting published reviews of each of the assessments.

The following protocol is used to introduce each assessment tool in the literature review: name of assessment instrument, description of the test, comments from critical reviews, and the advantages/disadvantages of each instrument.

#### *Brigance Diagnostic Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills- Revised (CIBS-R)*

The Brigance Diagnostic Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills-Revised (CIBS-R) is used for diagnosing and designing the instructional planning for students between five through thirteen years of age (Brigance & Glascoe, 1999). This assessment tool has over 154 subtests in a variety of curriculum based areas such as reading, writing, listening, spelling, speech, readiness, research, and study skills. The assessment results are used to determine a student's strengths and weaknesses in the content areas. This assessment is both norm- and criterion-referenced. The results will indicate the skills that need

to be mastered and which skills need more instruction. The CIBS-R Readiness battery requires approximately 75 minutes to complete while the assessment for grades one through six requires 45 to 60 minutes (Dickinson, 2003).

Cizek (2001), in the *Mental Measurement Yearbook (MMY)* states that the “CIBS-R can be used as it is primarily intended: as an objectives-referenced tool for documenting elementary and secondary school students’ mastery of specific skill” (p. 175). The reviewer also states that more test development and validation is needed for both the “norm- and objectives- based paths” (p. 175). In addition, Cizek (2001) states that the test-retest reliability is satisfactory because the correlation scores range between .80 and .97 (p. 174). Reliability is established through correlating scores from administering the alternative form of the CIBS-R (Dickinson, 2003).

Dickinson (2003) states, “There is no evidence of the test item validity based on an analysis of test items even though it is stated in the Standardization and Validation Manual on p. 39 that there is abundant support for content validity” (p. 364). Cizek (2001) agrees with Dickinson stating, “The level of content validity evidence provided falls short of abundant as claimed in the technical manual” (p. 174).

The test correlations are made between CIBS-R and Woodcock Johnson Psycho- Educational Battery. Partial correlations are made between CIBS-R and group achievement tests such as Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, California Achievement Tests, and the Stanford Achievement Test (Dickinson, 2003). The assessment needs more evidence to support the mastery/nonmastery cutoffs.

Cizek (2001) also recommends more accommodations made for students who are English Language Learners.

According to Dickinson (2003), “The standardized portions of the CIBS-R may be useful for the special education teacher or education evaluator when considering special education placement for the students“(pp. 371-372). This assessment tool is best used for “pinpointing student skills, selecting objectives, and planning instruction for the special needs students” (Dickinson, p. 373). However, when using this assessment, more testing may be needed in order to determine placement in a special education program. Included in the CIBS-R is a good section of do’s and don’ts for the educator. The Inventory has boxes which have specific directions for obtaining basals and ceilings for portions of the inventory that are standardized.

#### *Woodcock-Johnson III Tests (WJ-III)*

The Woodcock-Johnson III Tests (WJ-III) may be used from age 3 through 90 years. This assessment primarily is used for determining if a school-aged child would qualify for placement in special education programs due to learning problems. The information from the assessment helps the teacher write instructional goals for an Individualized Education Plan based on the child’s areas of strengths and weaknesses. The discrepancy scores do give information that is needed to meet the IDEA requirements for diagnosing and placing of students with learning problems. A discrepancy score indicates a gap between cognitive ability and achievement levels (Lau-Dickinson, 2003). The assessment is norm-referenced. The scoring called Compuscore is computerized.

Compuscore produces reports that allow the teacher to make modifications in instruction (Lau-Dickinson, 2003).

According to Cizek (2007), the Woodcock Johnson III has been improved by re-norming the batteries by using a large representative sample of participants. The manuals give information regarding the “developmental procedures, reliability and validity evidence, administration, scoring procedures, and interpretive guides and cautions” (Cizek, 2007, p. 1021). The manuals also provide detailed information on the qualifications and expectations of the examiner.

According to Cizek (2007), the Woodcock Johnson III is easy to use. In the assessment, ten subtests use a prerecorded tape for the student to follow. Eleven tests use student response booklets in which children show their work and write out their answers. The time limits for the subtests are generous with only a few timed due to measuring speed and math/reading fluency. The information gathered from the tests gives teachers the ability to tell the student’s ability level. The software scoring program helps to eliminate scoring errors (Cizek, 2007). An advantage of the WJ III is that selected subtests may be given to avoid unnecessary testing. WJ III also has additional tests that may be given to supply more information in particular subject areas (Cizek, 2007). Special attention in the revised version is given to accuracy and test fairness.

Test re-test reliability rates which are conducted three times a year scored between .70 and .90 (Cizek, 2007). Validity may need to be strengthened because the test does not “cover some abilities as efficiently as other cognitive

measures” (Cizek, 2007, p. 1027). Cizek (2007) also notes that the content validity in the assessment received “skimpy treatment” and needs to be strengthened. The concurrent validity score range of the KTEA and the WIAT has a correlation between .50 and .80 (Sandoval, 2007).

At first, teachers may be intimidated by the number of subtests, finding and establishing the basals and ceilings, and by the complexity of interpreting the scores and results (Lau-Dickinson, 2003). The average teacher may also be overwhelmed with all the information that is gathered from the test and not know how to use the information accurately (Sandoval, 2007). With repeated use, most teachers find the test to be user-friendly (Lau-Dickinson, 2003). The authors of the WJ III manual recommend that the people using it should be trained (Woodcock, McGrew, Mather, & Schrank, 2001). According to Cizek (2007), the strengths of the WJ III outweigh the weaknesses.

#### *The Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)*

The Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) is used for testing individuals between the ages of five years through twenty-four years, eleven months. According to Schnepel (2003a), the four main purposes for using the assessment are:

to identify individuals who are significantly below their peers in important phonological abilities, to determine strengths and weaknesses among developed phonological processes, to document individuals’ progress in phonological processing as a consequence of special intervention programs,



and to serve as a measurement device in research studies investigating phonological processing (p. 465).

If an individual demonstrates a deficit in one or more of the three kinds of phonological processing abilities, then the test administrator recommends instructional goals and plans to help improve the individual's phonological skills. These interventions can be done at any age.

Two versions exist of the CTOPP. One is to be used with children ages five and six. The other version is to be used for individuals between the ages of seven and twenty-four. The CTOPP has thirteen subtests that reside under the broad categories of Phonological Awareness, Phonological Memory, and Rapid Naming. The subtests address specific phonetic skills that may affect an individual's reading ability. Additional subtests may be given in order to examine an individual's specific phonological strengths and weaknesses. The CTOPP is to be used as an individualized test that will take approximately 30 minutes to administer (Hurford, 2007). The assessment tool is norm-referenced and criterion-referenced.

Hurford (2007) also notes limitations concerning the CTOPP because sampling is poorly described and the data may not correspond to the actual normative comparisons. Hurford states, "Reliability was estimated using internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and interrater reliability" (p. 227). The internal reliability scores indicate that it is a reliable measure for phonological processing "regardless of gender, minority group status, or developmental status" (p. 227). The test-retest reliability scores averaged .82 for five to seven year olds, .80 for

eight to seventeen year olds, and .79 for eighteen to twenty-four year olds. Due to questions regarding the representation of students within the sampling, the averaged reliability estimates are too low for making a determination as to whether an individual needs more help. Concerning content validity, Hurford (2007) states, “each of the subtests that comprise CTOPP has been used in research paradigms examining phonological processing over the past two to three decades” (p. 227). Due to this, the subtests are well established in assessing phonological processing (Hurford, 2007).

The criterion-related validity examines the correlations between the CTOPP and the Word Identification and Word Analysis subtests from the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test –Revised (WRMT-R). Concurrent validity scores of the CTOPP are comparable to the Lindamood Auditory Conceptualization Tests, the WRMT-R, the Gray Oral Reading Test 3, and the Wide Range Achievement Test – 3 (WRAT-3). The average correlation concurrent score between the CTOPP, the Lindamood Auditory Conceptualization Tests, the WRMT-R, the GORT-3, and the WRAT-3 is .43 and predictive validity average is .46. Improvements in scores from Kindergarten, second grade, fifth grade, and seventh grade were noted (Hurford, 2007).

The CTOPP is easy to follow because the instructions in the manuals are very thorough for both administration and scoring of the test. However, the CTOPP authors recommend training for anyone who uses this tool (Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte, 1999). The test results yield clear information about a

student's abilities in phonological awareness and memory rapid naming (Hurford, 2007).

*Gray Oral Reading Test, Fourth Edition (GORT-4)*

The Gray Oral Reading Test, Fourth Edition (GORT-4) is an oral reading assessment to test the rate, fluency, accuracy, and comprehension of a student. The GORT-4 has several purposes in assessing students between the ages of six and eighteen years of age. One purpose is to identify students who are below proficiency in oral reading and determining a student's areas of strength and weakness. Another purpose is to follow progress that the student has made due to remediation. The third purpose is that the GORT-4 serves as a research tool to measure various students' reading abilities and skills (Wiederholt & Bryant, 2001). The GORT-4 is considered a norm-referenced assessment tool. In addition, "The GORT-4 is referenced to reading skills, but is not referenced to specific curricular or instructional skills" (Schnepel, 2003b, p. 392).

The GORT-4 is easy to follow and can be administered, in most instances, in one session. The GORT-4 is used as a "diagnostic tool to diagnose students with reading problems and as a pre-and posttest measure of student progress in reading" (Crumpton, p. 420). The detailed examiner's manual makes it easy for teachers to understand and to use. This assessment has been used in various forms since 1963. The test re-test reliability rate is .85 to .95 for the complete assessment (Miller-Whitehead, 2007). The updated version has improved validity and reliability scores in its sample studies (Crumpton, 2007).

The GORT-4 examiner's manual has information on how to use and score the test. Crumpton (2007) recommends practicing prompts, timing the reading rate, and marking mistakes before using the test to assess struggling students. In addition, Crumpton states that much of the content has stayed the same over the years. However, bias in culture and language has been removed.

Being able to document and score the student's assessment takes some practice because much is expected of the examiner. The examiner has to be able to "prompt the reader, time the reader's rate, and mark deviations from print in the process of testing" (Crumpton, 2007, p. 419). Keenan and Betjemann (2006) conducted a study of the GORT-4 that questioned the content and concurrent validity. Through their research, the authors found that students could answer many comprehension passages using background knowledge. "Children can reach their decoding ceiling before they reach a comprehension ceiling" (Keenan & Betjemann, p. 377).

### *Key Math 3*

Key Math 3 may be used for the assessment of individuals from four years, six months old through twenty-one years of age. The purpose of this assessment is to measure math proficiency by covering concepts and skills that are taught in the regular math class, to give instructional support to the teacher by giving accurate information about the student being assessed, and to accurately place the students in their instructional math level. It is a norm-referenced assessment that is given individually and is untimed. The assessment has been divided into ten subtests that consist of numeration, algebra, geometry,

measurement, data analysis and probability, mental computation and estimation, addition and subtraction, multiplication and division, foundations of problem solving, and applied problem solving. The test can be hand scored or scored with the Key Math-3 DA ASSIST Scoring and Reporting System (Connelly, 2007).

Graham, Lane, and Moore (2008) have stated that Key Math 3 has been updated to correspond to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards. The reviewers have also noted the assessment tool provides valuable information to teachers about a student's strengths and weaknesses in different areas of math. More problem solving is added to meet the national standards. A recommendation is made that teachers may want to look for patterns within the subtests when designing an intervention program for struggling math students (Graham, Lane, & Moore, 2008). Key Math 3 was published in 2007 and is in the process of being reviewed by Buros in the 18th Mental Measurements Yearbook (MMY, 2009).

#### *Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures*

Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures published by the Consortium on Reading Excellence (CORE) is a compilation of different informal assessments chosen due to their previous success by CORE (Consortium on Reading Excellence, 1999). The compilations of informal assessments have been used for years. The assessments include Phonological Awareness Screening Test, San Diego Quick Assessment of Reading Ability, Fry Oral Reading Test, "Words Their Way" Qualitative Spelling Inventory, Critchlow Verbal Language Scales, and McLeod Assessment of Reading Comprehension. In addition, other tests written

specifically for CORE include CORE Phoneme Deletion Test, CORE Phonological Segmentation Test, and CORE Phonics Survey (Consortium on Reading Excellence, 1999).

Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures is compiled to “assist the teacher in targeting areas of strength and weakness, in monitoring student reading development, and in planning appropriate instruction” (Consortium on Reading Excellence, 1999, p. 5). The tests in Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures are chosen due to their ease of use and understanding of the directions by the teachers. Depending on the areas in which the student is struggling, the tests may be used independently or in conjunction with another formal or informal assessment. In the back of the manual for Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures, a short listing of different types of tests and resources for assessing reading is available. The examiner’s manual explains each test’s purpose and the appropriate levels of use. The manual gives a brief description of the test, directions on how to administer it, and scoring suggestions. Each test has a black line master of the tally sheets and stories. If the test results demonstrate that there is an area of weakness, the manual suggests a reading strategy to help the student. Because the Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures is an informal assessment, the Buros Institute of Mental Measurements did not review the test.

The purpose of the literature review was to find research about each assessment tool. The writer for the current paper summarized the purpose of each assessment and critiqued its validity and usefulness to teachers.

## PART III: IMPLEMENTATION

### Introduction

To ascertain the usefulness of a set of assessment tools, testing was conducted with students from a Lutheran Elementary School. This chapter will discuss the students chosen based upon their needs and the instruments evaluated to meet each of their needs. As the assessments were administered, they were also evaluated based upon six questions. The answers to the questions helped this writer to make a recommendation about the usefulness of each assessment in the Extended Learning Classroom.

### Procedures

The students were chosen by the Extended Learning Teacher and the regular classroom teachers based on the students' past academic performance. Based on the needs of the students, assessments were chosen to evaluate their usefulness. In addition, a letter and permission note were sent to the parents of these students (See Appendix A). The letter explained the purpose of the testing and when and where the testing was to take place. The students were an eight year old female with reading difficulties, an eleven year old male who is an English Language Learner diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and a thirteen year old male diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome as well as math and reading difficulties. The students were tested in the Extended Learning Classroom.

The tests were chosen based on different purposes. The first purpose was to evaluate a test that covered all academic areas. The Woodcock Johnson III

and the Brigance Diagnostic Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills-Revised assess students in a variety of academic areas. The second purpose was to evaluate a test that would be suitable for younger students in the area of reading. The Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing and the Gray Oral Reading Test-4 fit the category for formal assessments. Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures was chosen as an informal assessment to supplement the CTOPP and the GORT-4. The third purpose was to evaluate a test in the area of math to supplement the Woodcock Johnson III. Key Math 3 was chosen due to the content of the subtests.

When parental consent was received, a schedule was developed to establish when the assessments would take place. The assessments were administered over a period of three weeks. Each student was scheduled for one week of testing. The testing was carried out in the Extended Learning Classroom. The assessment took place for no more than 40 minutes per day per student using one or two of the assessment tools. A student was not to be assessed for a period longer than 40 minutes to reduce the potential of testing fatigue. The testing was done purposely in the time frame described so the student would not miss content area classes. The thirteen year old male was assessed during his morning Extended Learning math class. The eight year old female was assessed at the end of the school day and missed study periods and music class. The eleven year old male was excused from his early afternoon Extended Learning reading class. Testing was also arranged so the students would not make up or miss work due to participation in the field project.



The first student assessed was the eleven year old male with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. His testing took place in five sessions during the early afternoon for approximately 40 minutes each session. The assessment tools used were the Woodcock Johnson III Tests of Achievement and Key Math 3. The WJ III was chosen based upon the recommendation of the student's therapist and the student's past classroom performance. The goal was to determine the overall progress of the child. The Key Math 3 was chosen to assess the child's progress in math. The goal was to determine if the child had mastered math skills sufficiently to be transitioned from the Extended Learning math class back to the regular math class. The WJ III and Key Math 3 were easy to administer and score. Since the assessment took place over a few days, the WJ III and Key Math 3 easily lent itself to stop after a subtest and to start a new subtest the next day.

The second student assessed was the eight year old female with phonics and reading difficulties. Her testing occurred in four sessions during the late afternoons for no more than 30 minutes each session. The assessment tools used were the Gray Oral Reading Tests, the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing for Ages 7 through 24, and Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures. This student demonstrated difficulty with reading and comprehending the stories from her basal reader. She also could not remember sight words that had been previously memorized or sound out words efficiently. Due to these difficulties, the Gray Oral Reading Test -4 was chosen because it measured fluency and comprehension. The GORT 4 would indicate the student's strengths

and weaknesses in other areas of reading. The CTOPP was utilized to assess phonological processing skills. The student had difficulty sounding out words due to the fact she could not remember the phonics rules. The Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures was chosen because it was an informal assessment where subtests could be chosen based on the results of the previous formal assessments. After the GORT-4 and the CTOPP were administered and scored, two subtests within Assessing Reading were chosen to administer the next day to further define the specific reading difficulties of the child. All of the tests were easy to understand and administer.

The third student assessed was the thirteen year old male with Asperger's Syndrome. His testing occurred in five sessions during the late morning for about 40 minutes each session. The assessment tool utilized was the Brigance Diagnostic Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills – Revised. The purpose of choosing the Brigance was to try to find specific problems in the areas of reading and math based upon the student's past performance and at the recommendation of the classroom teacher. The variety of assessments in one binder made it difficult to use with a student. It took more time to plan the assessment and to prepare materials than the other tests.

On the first day, an explanation was given to the students that the assessments were to take place to help the Extended Learning Teacher and the classroom teacher understand the students' unique learning needs. The students were told they were helping the Extended Learning Teacher with a field project. Tests were given each day at the scheduled time. Summaries were written at the

end of each week to answer six pointed questions (See Appendix B). The summaries included how the assessment tool was administered, the advantages and disadvantages of each test, and the benefits to a LES ELP. More information about the assessments and the questions are found in the artifacts.

### Artifacts

The assessments instruments used in the field project were: the Gray Oral Reading Tests, the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing for Ages 7 through 24, the Brigance Diagnostic Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills-Revised, Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures, the Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement III, and Key Math 3. Each test was chosen based on the needs of the children at the suggestion of a local public school special education (SPED) teacher. The following list of questions, created by this writer, was used to critique each test:

- For what purpose is the assessment used?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the assessment tool?
- What are the limitations in terms of age or grade levels of the assessment tool?
- Are there suggestions for using the assessment with struggling learners?
- How user friendly is the assessment for teachers to use and understand?

- Would the researcher recommend purchasing this assessment?  
(See Appendix B).

### Impressions

Based on the evaluation utilizing the six questions, the assessment tools that would best fit the Extended Learning Program would be the Woodcock Johnson III, Key Math 3, the Gray Oral Reading Test, and the Comprehensive Testing of Phonological Processing (See Appendix D). The Woodcock Johnson has many subtests that can be used in its entirety or individually based on the student's needs. The use of the Compuscore made scoring the assessment easy. Compuscore also made reports that helped produce an evaluation report. The most beneficial report gleaned from the WJ III was the Summary and Score Report. The report included sections about the session observations, a summary of the standard scores, a table of the scores for the teacher, and a parent's report that explained each subtest.

Key Math 3 is an informative assessment tool in the area of math. The many subtests give the teacher the choice to administer subtest based on the student's learning needs. The computer scoring called Key Math 3 DA Assist was easy to use. The computer reports included a breakdown of each subtest and a descriptive category of scoring for average, above and below average. Each subtest has a complete explanation for the teacher and the parent.

The Gray Oral Reading Test – 4 is intended to assess oral reading. The GORT-4 was easy to administer and to score. The GORT-4 was different from the WJ III and Key Math 3 because it was hand scored. The information gathered

from the assessment guides the teacher in determining the student's oral reading difficulties.

The Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing provided information in the areas of visual and auditory processing. The test was easy to administer but difficult to score. Due to the difficulty in scoring the test, the SPED teacher from the local public school explained and helped to score the assessment. The CTOPP would be a useful test to supplement the Woodcock Johnson III when assessing students with reading and phonological difficulties.

The Brigance Diagnostic Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills-Revised measures overall academic skills. This assessment test has many subtests that can be chosen to assess the student's needs. The Brigance was difficult to administer. The forms were side by side in the binder which made it confusing to keep track of which form to use. Due to the organization of the binders, the directions were difficult to find for each subtest. The bulkiness of the binder made it difficult to maneuver.

Teachers may find Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures a useful assessment tool in the classroom. Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures assesses early reading skills. This informal assessment has many subtests from which to choose. The choice of the subtests depends on the student's reading difficulties. Assessing Reading would be a useful test in the beginning stages of assessing a struggling reader. The Teaching Reading Sourcebook has suggestions for modification. Since the Extended Learning Program has the

Qualitative Reading Inventory-4, Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures would not be needed at this time.

## PART IV: REFLECTIVE ESSAY

### Introduction

As the number of students with learning disabilities increases in today's society, the more knowledgeable teachers need to be about a variety of assessment tools. When I attend IEP meetings at the public school, the members of the IEP Team discuss the different assessment tools and how to build an IEP for a child. Since I attend IEP Team meetings, I wanted to learn as much as possible about the assessment tools that are available. In order to decide what assessment tools would be best for my school, I need to research each tool, to use the tool in assessing the child, and evaluate its usefulness to the teacher and the school.

I did my research for each of the six tests to learn about quality assessment tools. The results of my research are found in the Literature Review of this paper. The first item was to choose students who would benefit from being assessed. I wanted students from each level, primary, elementary, and junior high, with different learning problems. A note to the parents explained the field project and asked for permission to test their child (See Appendix A). I also contacted each parent in person to give them more details.

Once I secured the permission notes, the next step was to gather the assessment tools. The plan was to contact educators at the local public school to get suggestions of the different type of formal assessment tools they use in the areas of reading and math at different academic levels. I also asked another WELS teacher for her suggestions on informal assessments. With the other

teachers' help, I chose the six tests that would give me a glimpse into the different academic areas. To match the child with the correct assessment tool, I looked at the child's area of weakness. The assessment tools and results would benefit me, the Extended Learning Teacher, in the selection of appropriate assessment tools.

After gathering the assessments and having read through them, I met with the classroom teachers and principal to make a schedule for the testing to take place (See Appendix C). I tried to schedule more time than needed so I would have enough time to assess each student and to evaluate the assessment tools. If a conflict appeared, we already had an alternative date and time scheduled.

The first student assessed was the eleven year old male. The child had been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder but also struggled because he is an English Language Learner. I was trying to determine how well an English Language Learner would do with these types of assessments. I was also interested in seeing how this student would focus during the testing and how he would interpret what he was reading. He has spoken English for about two and a half years and has forgotten most of his native language. I knew he would work well in one-on-one situations and could focus for short periods of time. The way the Woodcock Johnson broke down its test into subtests worked well for him. He could stay focused for the short periods of time for each subtest. I noticed that he had to read the stories orally by whispering them rather than reading them silently. I documented his behavior by making notes on the recording sheet.



The second student assessed was the eight year old female. As I did not know how long to plan for her tests, I scheduled ample time for her tests. She made it through the first two assessments, the CTOPP and the GORT-4, averaging about 20-25 minutes for each. As she read during the assessments, she sounded very confident. I was surprised by how well she did with the oral reading because her classroom teacher indicated she has difficulties with reading fluency, sight words, and comprehension. She did struggle somewhat sounding out words, and her comprehension score was somewhat low. I spent the weekend going through the Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures to decide what tests to do next. I did the CORE Phoneme Deletion Test Part C and D. Part C was where the teacher says “slip,” and the student repeats it. Then the teacher says, “Now say it without the /s/”, and then the student does it. She could do this well. Therefore, we moved to Part D which is deleting an embedded sound of a consonant blend. The student began to struggle in this section. After the testing period, I evaluated the student’s test results to determine areas of strengths and difficulties.

The third student assessed was the thirteen year old male with Asperger’s Syndrome. Since this student had been assessed before with the Woodcock Johnson III, I decided to assess him by using the Brigance. Planning his assessment was more of a challenge than planning the assessments of the other two children. Choosing the appropriate subtest of the Brigance to administer to this child was problematic. Due to all of the changes in the student’s routine, I knew the student was getting frustrated. Due to Asperger’s, he does not adjust

well to change. I scheduled one day of testing and spent the rest of the week explaining how I would be testing him the following week.

### Conclusions

Reading through the literature and utilizing the assessment tools brought great understanding of what is involved in choosing and administering assessment tools. From the literature, I learned about each assessment's strengths and weaknesses. When administering the tests I gained an appreciation for the SPED teacher's work with assessments. The comments in the literature review highlight the need for the examiner to become comfortable with administering the assessments (Crumpton, 2007). The more familiar I became with the assessment tools, the more comfortable I became with administering the tests. The manual scoring of some of the assessment tools was difficult and cumbersome. With practice, scoring may become easier to accomplish. Some of the directions in the manual are difficult to follow.

The evaluation of the assessment tools in the field project was beneficial to me. Through the use of the assessment tools, I learned more about each of the students. I also learned testing takes time to plan, scheduling needs to be flexible, documenting the information is important, and scoring can be difficult.

The conclusions of the field project are based on the evaluation of the assessment tools using the six questions and not upon reliability and validity. The results of the field project led me to make decisions about the purchase of assessment tools for the Extended Learning Classroom. The assessment tools chosen were the Woodcock Johnson III, KeyMath 3, the Comprehensive Test of

Phonological Processing and the Gray Oral Reading Test - 4. Overall, the experience was beneficial because I reviewed literature, became familiar with a variety of tests, and was able to choose assessment tools to benefit the students in the ELC.

### Recommendations

All of the assessment tools had definite advantages that would be beneficial to an Extended Learning Classroom. Four of the tools were geared towards a specific academic area such as reading or math while two of the tools measured overall achievement. My recommendation of the assessment tools is based on what would benefit the ELC teacher. Much practice would be needed in administering the tests before using them to assess students with learning difficulties. I believe it would be beneficial for LES teachers to utilize the assessment tools to learn more about the strengths and weakness of their students. I have learned much about the assessment process and am appreciative of what the public school provides to our LES. I would encourage the teachers to utilize the public school for assessment purposes. I can now actively collaborate with my public school counterparts when assessing the students in my school.

Finally, I plan to use what I learned through this field project. I anticipate sharing the information with my school as well as other teachers who teach children with learning disabilities. The sharing could be through teachers' conferences or inservice workshops.

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Appendix A

Letter and Permission Note

September 19, 2008

Dear Parents,

I have a favor to ask of you. I am nearing the end of my Master's Program in Special Education. In order to graduate in May, 2009, I need to complete a field project. My field project is to research and try out formal assessment tools that are used by the public school and evaluate the usefulness of them for David's Star.

What is my favor? I would like your permission to assess your child using one of these assessment tools. The assessments would be in math, reading, and/or overall academic achievement. This would be another tool to help me help your child in their education at David's Star. I would also be sharing all of the results of your child's assessment with you and the child's classroom teacher.

All testing would take place at David's Star in the Extended Learning Classroom in the afternoon.

Please consider this request. If you would like to know more about this, please contact me at the numbers and email address listed below. If you give me permission to assess your child, please complete the bottom portion of this note and return it to me by Friday, September 26<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you for your time!  
Yours in Christ,  
Sheila M. Krause  
David's Star Lutheran School  
Extended Learning Teacher

School: 262-677-2412 or 262-375-1843  
Home: 262-677-0716  
Email: [skrause@davidstar.org](mailto:skrause@davidstar.org)

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Yes, I give Mrs. Krause permission to test my child, \_\_\_\_\_,  
at David's Star.

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Six Critique Questions

1. For what purpose is the assessment used?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the assessment tool?
3. What are the limitations in terms of age or grade levels of the assessment tool?
4. Are there suggestions for using the assessment with struggling learners?
5. How user friendly is the assessment for teachers to use and understand?
6. Would the researcher recommend purchasing this assessment?

## Appendix C

### Copy of the Planned Schedule for Assessment

Testing took place in November, 2008.

**Week One** – November 3-6, 2008 (There was no school on Friday.)

Student 1

Week 1 – *Woodcock Johnson III*

Monday, Day 1 → 2:15 – 3:00 PM

Tuesday, Day 2 → 12:15 – 1:00 PM

Thursday, Day 3 → 12:15 – 12:45 PM (Only if needed)

Student 2

Week 1/Tuesday, Day 1 → *GORT-4* 2:30 – 3:00 PM

Wednesday, Day 2 → *CTOPP* 12:30 – 1:00 PM

Student 3

Week 1 – *Brigance*

Monday, Day 1 → 10:15 – 10:45 AM

Wednesday, Day 2 → 10:15 – 10:45 AM

Thursday, Day 3 → 10:15 – 11:00 AM

**Week 2** – November 10 – 14, 2008

Student 1

Week 2 – *KeyMath 3*

Wednesday, Day 1 → 12:30 – 1:30 PM

Student 2

Week 2 – *Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures* (only 2 assessments were chosen)

Monday, Day 1 → 2:15-3:00 PM

Student 3

Due to scheduling conflicts only one day of testing was done this week.

Tuesday, Day 1 → 2:15 – 2:45 PM

**Week 3** – November 17 – 21, 2008

I had days planned for Student 1 and 2 only if needed, but they were not needed.

Student 3

Tuesday, Day 1 → 10:15 – 10:45 AM

Wednesday, Day 2 → 10:15 -10:45 AM The entire time was not needed. This day had been planned on an extra day only if needed.

## Appendix D

### Critical Analysis of the Assessment Tools

#### *Gray Oral Reading Tests*

1. For what purpose is the assessment used?

There are four purposes for this assessment: 1) to help identify those students who are significantly below their peers in oral reading proficiency and who may profit from supplemental help; 2) to aid in determining the particular kinds of reading strengths and weaknesses that individual students possess; 3) to document students' progress in reading as a consequence of special intervention programs; and 4) to serve as a measurement device in investigations where researchers are studying the reading abilities of school-aged students (Wiederholt & Bryant, 2001).

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the assessment tool?

One of the advantages of the assessment is the short amount of time that it takes to assess a child. The examiner's manual has well-written directions for implementing and scoring the test. The information provided by the results was beneficial in helping to remediate reading difficulties. A disadvantage which could improve with experience is the examiner ability to coordinate everything at once. Being able to document mistakes made in the oral reading, start and stop the timer, and interpret the results. I believe with more practice an examiner can overcome this problem.

3. What are the limitations in terms of age or grade levels of the assessment tool?

The assessment tool is for ages 6 to 18 years of age. The student must also be able to read. The test assumes that the student at the age of 6 years old can read its simplest test.

4. Are there suggestions for using the assessment with struggling learners?

The assessment is used more as a measurement of whether or not a student is progressing due to special intervention, but suggestions how to help the child are not available.

5. How user friendly is the assessment for teachers to use and understand?

It was very easy to read through the small manual and understand how to use the test.

6. Would the researcher recommend purchasing the assessment?

If a school can afford to purchase this assessment, then I would recommend it because the public school looks at it as a formal assessment tool for remediation. But if the school just wants to see if a child is progressing, then I would recommend using an informal assessment. Much of what is in the GORT-4 is similar to an informal reading fluency assessment that is provided in most reading curriculums today.

### *Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing for Ages 7 through 24*

1. For what purpose is the assessment used?

The purpose of this assessment tool is to look at a student's phonological abilities, to determine their strengths and weaknesses in the phonological processes, and to document progress when intervention takes place.

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the assessment tool?

An advantage was seeing the difference between visual processing and auditory processing for my student. Its purpose is to demonstrate areas of weakness in processing which it did. I learned much about the child just by giving them the test. The disadvantage was the difficulty in scoring the assessment because the directions in the manual were confusing.

3. What are the limitations in terms of age or grade levels of the assessment tool?

The age limits were for 5 years through 24 years of age. Some parts of this test could be used for non-readers.

4. Are there suggestions for using the assessment with struggling learners?

The manual states that the results "may contribute to the selection of long-term educational goals but should not be used as the basis for day-to-day instructional planning" (Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte, 1999, p. 56). The information may be used to build a plan, but the examiner would need to know which specific forms the student needs to learn.

5. How user friendly is the assessment for teachers to use and understand?

The assessment itself was user friendly, and easy to use, and to understand. The scoring of the assessment was problematic.

6. Would the researcher recommend purchasing the assessment?

Even though the scoring was difficult, I did find it interesting to see how a student processes what he/she sees or hears. I think from just that part the teacher can learn much about how the student learns and can apply it to his/her teaching. With that understanding, some modifications may be done.

*Brigance Diagnostic Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills- Revised*

1. For what purpose is the assessment used?

The purpose of this assessment is to “simplify and combine the process of assessing, diagnosing, record keeping, and instructional planning for elementary and middle school students” (Dickinson, 2003, p. 362).

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the assessment tool?

The teacher needs to plan ahead of time the type of tests and the number of tests they wish to administer. Because I wanted to try out different parts of the assessment, I tried out different sections with my student. He was very cooperative in doing sections that were below his age level just to give me the experience. I found the assessment book overwhelming and spent much time looking it over. The words that the examiner were to read were in bold print, but at times I had difficulty in finding the words for the correct test. The problem may have been more from manipulation of the booklet between the student and me. I finally just made copies of the pages for him so I could keep the booklet to read.

3. What are the limitations in terms of age or grade levels of the assessment tool?

The test was designed for students ages 5 through 13 years of age.

4. Are there suggestions for using the assessment with struggling learners?

Dickinson (2003) states that there is a Standardization and Validation Manual that gives examples of ways that teachers can interpret the results and use them for placement and planning instruction. I did not have that manual so I did not implement any suggestions.

5. How user friendly is the assessment for teachers to use and understand?

Comments by researchers indicate that it is user friendly. I have also had other teachers who have used it and really liked it. I found it overwhelming and confusing. Maybe with more practice and usage I would be able to understand it better.

6. Would the researcher recommend purchasing the assessment?

Since I struggled with it, I would borrow it from another school and use it a few more times for practice to make sure that I am comfortable with it.

### *Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures*

1. For what purpose is the assessment used?

According the manual, the purpose for this assessment is help the teacher identify why a student is having reading difficulty and determine what the next step in instruction should be to remediate.

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the assessment tool?



The advantage of this assessment of that you can choose which assessments to use based on your knowledge as the classroom teacher. They are easy to use and to understand. You do not need any formal training to use these assessments. The disadvantage may be deciding which assessment to choose if you don't know the student very well.

3. What are the limitations in terms of age or grade levels of the assessment tool?

The assessment was written for grades kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

4. Are there suggestions for using the assessment with struggling learners?

In order to get suggestions for the struggling learner, you would need to purchase the *Teaching Reading Sourcebook* by the same company. The assessment will show the areas of weakness and the *Sourcebook* gives you the ideas to help your student.

5. How user friendly is the assessment for teachers to use and understand?

I used the two subtests CORE Phoneme Deletion Parts C and D with the student. I did look over the other assessments that were available and found they were very similar to other informal assessments. The subtests that I did use were easy to administer and score.

6. Would the researcher recommend purchasing the assessment?

Since the school already owns one informal reading assessment, *The Qualitative Reading Inventory-4*, and uses the assessments from our current reading curriculum SRA, I would not recommend it to our school at this time. I

would recommend it to other schools that may not have any informal assessments available to them.

*Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement III*

1. For what purpose is the assessment used?

The purpose of this assessment is to measure academic achievement.

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using this assessment tool?

The advantage of this assessment tool is that there are many subtests. You can give the entire test or just choose some of the subtests that target the area that you wish to assess. Directions are very clear for the examiner. Scoring the entire assessment is now easier with the Compuscore program. The examiner's manual gives adequate information in helping to score the writing sections. A disadvantage is trying to find the basal or ceiling level. If the ceiling level is 6 and a student gets 5 wrong in a row, then gets the next one correct, you keep going with the test. By doing this, I found that the student sometimes became frustrated. When I sensed this, I ended the assessment and made a note of it on the examiner's booklet.

3. What are the limitations in terms of age or grade levels of the assessment tool?

This assessment tool was designed for ages 2 through 90 years of age.

4. Are there suggestions for using the assessment with struggling learners?

There are no suggestions for using the assessment with a struggling learner.

5. How user friendly is the assessment for teachers to use and understand?

I found the assessment easy to use and to understand. Using the Compuscore made the scoring and writing of a report easier than if I had to hand score it.

6. Would the researcher recommend purchasing the assessment?

I would recommend the purchase of this assessment because it can be used as a full battery of tests or in smaller increments. I have recommended to my principal that our school purchase this assessment. I also recommended it because the public schools use it for most of their evaluations. By having our own copy and using it, we can compare our results with those of the public school when the specialists there do their assessments of our students.

*Key Math 3.*

1. For what purpose is the assessment used?

The purpose of this assessment is to measure a student's progress in math, to measure the student's math proficiency of concepts and skills being taught in our math curriculum, and to give accurate information regarding a student's level of skill and understanding of math concepts.

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the assessment tool?

The advantage of this assessment is the many subtests that are in this test. The subtests can be used as a full battery or individually to determine student proficiency in specific areas. It is easy to use and score the test. The

scoring is done through a computer program ASSIST scoring. It also produces reports for the parents and teachers. A disadvantage may be a school's math curriculum hasn't covered a particular concept, but the program assumes it has been. When this occurs, it can skew the results.

3. What are the limitations in terms of age or grade levels of the assessment tool?

The age range for this assessment is 4 years 6 months through 21 years of age.

4. Are there suggestions for using the assessment with struggling learners?

No suggestions for remediation are offered in this assessment.

5. How user friendly is the assessment for teachers to use and understand?

I found the assessment easy to use and to understand. Part of this may be due to the computer doing the scoring of the test. The writing of the results was also easier because it gives a print-out for the parents and the teacher.

6. Would the researcher recommend purchasing the assessment?

This is another assessment that I have recommended to my principal to purchase for our school. It would be a good addition to Woodcock Johnson III to supplement the math results.