

Using WAIS-IV and WIAT-III for Evaluation of College LD
Webinar April 12, 2011

Questions and Answers

- Q: Suggestions for assessing executive system functioning.
- A: The Delis-Kaplan Executive Function System offers 9 tests that will provide information on fundamental cognitive abilities and higher-order executive functions.
- Q: If a student does poorly in college but had a history of great academic success in both elementary and highschool, what could be the problem why this student is not performing as well in college? Most of the subtest performance on the WAIS is Average. Verbal comp. composite is lower than everything else, and the highest is processing speed.
- A: I'd be happy to consult regarding specific cases. It is difficult to generate hypotheses based on the information here.
- Q: I do not have the WIAT-3. May I attempt similar analysis and interpretation using the WRAT-4?
- A: You can use simple-difference analysis with WAIS-IV and any achievement measure. We do not have a study linking WAIS-IV and the Wide Range Achievement Test, so the predicted difference method cannot be used.
- Q: If the discrepancy between the predicted and actual score on the WIAT is statistically significant and clinically significant, would this be enough information to use to diagnose LDs?
- A: That depends on the criteria used by the state/school district. According to federal guidelines, there are several criteria that can be used to determine the presence of a Specific Learning Disability. One is
"The child does not achieve adequately for the child's age or to meet State-approved grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas, when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child's age or State-approved grade-level standards:
(i) Oral expression.
(ii) Listening comprehension.
(iii) Written expression.
(iv) Basic reading skill.
(v) Reading fluency skills.
(vi) Reading comprehension.
(vii) Mathematics calculation.
(viii) Mathematics problem solving."

A significant and unusual discrepancy between ability and achievement would meet this criterion. Previous definitions included a weakness in basic psychological processes.

- Q: Please make comments on the pattern of scores in the WAIS and WIAT for someone with an auditory processing disorder.
- A: Individuals with a Central Auditory Processing Disorder may have difficulty understanding the verbal directions on both the WAIS-IV and WIAT-III. In terms of content, they may struggle with the subtests for which the input demand is verbal. On the WIAT-III, they may have difficulty with reading and spelling which require integration of phonological and orthographic skills. They may also have difficulty with the oral language subtests on WIAT-III.
- Q: Why are the WAIS and WIAT definitions of Low Average, High Average, Superior, etc. different - it makes report writing confusing?
- A: On the WAIS-IV, scores from 90 to 109 are described as Average (2/3 standard deviation from mean). On the WIAT-III, scores from 85 to 115 are described as average (1 standard deviation from mean). It is not unusual for descriptive classifications to differ across test instruments, but this can be confusing for parents and other professionals. Because the descriptors of an examinee's performance vary across test instruments, some researchers recommend we standardize the test descriptors. "In an effort to make the test results easier to comprehend for parents and educators, it is recommended that a common set of performance-level descriptors be used for all tests scores. The exception to this classification would be tests that use a truncated t-score distribution to indicate psychopathology. . . . It is recommended that the classification labels for all tests administered, with those exceptions previously mentioned, be reported according to the following scale:

Standard Score	Scaled Score	Percentile Rank (%)	Classification Label
>132	>16	99-100	Well Above Expected
116-132	14-16	86-98	Above Expected
111-115	13	76-85	Slightly Above Expected
86-110	8-12	18-75	At Expected
81-85	7	10-17	Slightly Below Expected
68-80	4-6	2-9	Below Expected
<68	<4	<2	Well Below Expected

(Miller, D. C., 2007. Essentials of school neuropsychological assessment, pp. 310-311. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley).

If you have additional questions, please email gloria.maccow@pearson.com