

# Wrightslaw: All About Tests and Assessments

## Glossary of Assessment Terms

**Ability.** A characteristic that is indicative of competence in a field. (See also aptitude.)

**Ability testing.** Use of norm-referenced tests to evaluate an individual's performance in a specific area (i.e., cognitive, psychomotor, or physical functioning).

**Abstract reasoning.** The understanding of facts, concepts, and ideas through analysis and the application of verbal and nonverbal thought processes.

**Academic.** Relating to school, particularly reading, writing, and math.

**Accommodations.** Describe changes in format, response, setting, timing, or scheduling that do not alter in any significant way what the test measures or the comparability of scores.

Accommodations are designed to ensure that an assessment measures the intended construct, not the child's disability. Accommodations affect three areas of testing: 1) the administration of tests, 2) how students are allowed to respond to the items, and 3) the presentation of the tests (how the items are presented to the students on the test instrument). Accommodations may include Braille forms of a test for blind students or tests in native languages for students whose primary language is other than English.

**Achievement test.** Norm-referenced test that measures competency in academic subject areas.

**Adaptive behavior.** The collective communication, daily living, and socialization skills that permit individuals to function with independence and dignity in their homes, schools, and communities.

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).** Refers to annual improvement that states, school districts and schools must make each year, as measured by academic assessments, so that all public elementary and secondary schools have the same high academic standards.

**Age equivalent.** The chronological age in a population for which a score is the median (middle) score. If children who are 10 years and 6 months old have a median score of 17 on a test, the score 17 has an age equivalent of 10-6.

**Age norms.** Refers to the comparison between a student's performance on a test and other students of the same age in the norming sample that serves as the basis for the standard score.

**Alternate assessment.** Usually means an alternative to a paper and pencil test; refers to non-conventional methods of assessing achievement (e.g., work samples and portfolios).

**Alternate form.** Two or more versions of a test that are considered interchangeable, in that they measure the same constructs in the same ways, are intended for the same purposes, and are administered using the same directions. Alternate forms are used when frequent administrations of a test might result in an increase of scores due to a practice effect, also known as equivalent form.

**Alternate form reliability.** A statistic that measures the consistency between different forms of the same test that are designed to measure the same set of skills.

**Aptitude.** An individual's ability to learn or to develop proficiency in an area if provided with appropriate education or training. Aptitude tests include tests of general academic (scholastic) ability; tests of special abilities (i.e., verbal, numerical, mechanical); tests that assess "readiness" for learning; and tests that measure ability and previous learning that are used to predict future performance.

**Aptitude tests.** Tests that measure an individual's collective knowledge. Aptitude tests are often used to predict learning potential. See also ability test.

**Articulation.** The process by which the teeth, tongue, and lips and other speech organs make speech sounds.

**Assessment.** The process of testing students to identify and confirm skills and abilities as a foundation for educational decisions, often used interchangeably with evaluation.

**Assistive technology device.** Equipment used to maintain or improve the capabilities of a child with a disability.

**Audiology.** Related service that includes identification, determination of hearing loss, and referral for habilitation of hearing.

**Auditory processing.** The ability to process information that is heard.

**Auditory processing disorder (APD).** A developmental or acquired impairment that affects the ability to recognize, discriminate, integrate, order, and localize speech sounds. APD is not the result of challenges with intelligence, language, or attention. Also known as central auditory processing disorder (CAPD).

**Autism.** IDEA disability category referring to a developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction that adversely affects educational performance.

**Automaticity.** The ability to perform a task without conscious effort.

**Average.** The measure of central tendency. See mean, mode, and median.

**Basal.** A convention in testing that ensures that students will not spend too much time on items (skills) that are too easy for them. All items below the basal on a test are assumed to be correct. These items are awarded full credit.

**Behavior Intervention Plan.** A plan of positive behavioral interventions in the IEP of a child whose behaviors interfere with his/her learning of that of others.

**Bell curve.** A term that refers to the bell shape of a normal distribution of IQ scores in a population. The bell curve is symmetrical. Most individuals earn scores in the average range. There are equal numbers of individuals with exceptional skill and very low skill.

**Benchmark.** Levels of academic performance used as checkpoints to monitor progress toward performance goals and/or academic standards.

**Bottom.** Refers to the lower-level items in a test. When a test has sufficient bottom, it is able to discriminate between lower levels of performance. The bottom of a test is particularly important when testing young children or children with poorly developed skills.

**Ceiling.** A rule for test administration that limits the time for testing and ensures that students will not struggle with items that are too difficult. When students reach the ceiling for a particular test or subtest, testing is stopped. Items above the ceiling are not awarded credit.

**Child with a disability.** A child with cognitive impairment, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities - and who need special education and related services.

**Classroom assessment.** An assessment developed, administered, and scored by a teacher to evaluate individual or classroom student performance.

**Cognition.** The study of how people think and solve problems.

**Competency tests.** Tests that measure proficiency in subject areas like math and English. Some states require that students pass competency tests before graduating.

**Composite score.** The practice of combining two or more subtest scores to create a score that represents skill in an area as a whole. For example, a reading composite may reflect performance on both reading vocabulary and reading comprehension subtests.

**Comprehensive evaluation.** An evaluation that addresses all areas related to the suspected disability.

**Concrete thinking.** A type of thought that focuses on observable physical features and facts.

**Confidence intervals.** The range of scores that captures a student’s true score with a certain degree of probability or confidence.

**Consent.** Requirement that the parent be fully informed of all information that relates to any action the school wants to take about the child, that parent understands that consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time. See also Procedural safeguards notice and prior written notice.

**Content area.** An academic subject such as math, science, or social studies.

**Content Standards.** Expectations about what the child should know and be able to do in different subjects and grade levels. Standards define expected student skills and knowledge and what schools should teach.

**Conversion table.** A chart used to translate test scores into different measures of performance (e.g., standard scores and percentile ranks).

**Core academic subjects.** English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography.

**Correlation.** A measure of the relationship between two or more variables ( $r$ ).

**Counseling services.** Related service that includes services provided by social workers, psychologists, guidance counselors, or other qualified personnel.

**Criteria.** Guidelines or rules that are used to judge performance.

**Criterion-reference test.** A test that measures an individual’s mastery of a well-defined body of knowledge such as a weekly spelling lesson. The individual’s performance is compared to an objective or performance standard, not to the performance of other students.

Such tests usually cover relatively small units of content and are closely related to instruction. Their scores have meaning in terms of what the student knows or can do, rather than in (or in addition to) their relation to the scores made by some norm group. Frequently, the meaning is given in terms of a cutoff score, for which people who score above that point are considered to have scored adequately (“mastered” the material), while those who score below it are thought to have inadequate scores.

**Curriculum.** Instructional plan of skills, lessons, and objectives on a particular subject that may be authored by a state or textbook publisher. A teacher typically executes this plan.

**Curriculum-based assessment.** A measurement of student skill that is based on the content and methods used in the classroom. It is used to make specific determinations regarding a student’s mastery of curriculum within a scope and sequence.

**Curriculum-based measurement (CBM).** A method to measure student progress in academic areas including math, reading, writing, and spelling. The child is tested briefly (1 to 5 minutes) at frequent intervals (weekly, biweekly, monthly). Scores are recorded on a graph and compared to the expected performance on the content for that year. The graph allows the teacher and parents to see quickly how the child's performance compares to expectations.

**CHC theory.** The leading theory of intelligence based on the integration of Cattell-Horn Gf-Gc theory (Horn & Noll, 1997) and Carroll's three-stratum theory (Carroll, 1993, 1997). It describes intelligence as a grouping of abilities that cluster into different groupings. The Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Cognitive Abilities is based on CHC theory.

**Deaf-blindness.** IDEA disability category. Deaf-blindness includes hearing and visual impairments that cause severe communication, developmental, and educational problems that adversely affects educational performance.

**Deafness.** IDEA disability category. An impairment in processing information through hearing that adversely affects educational performance.

**Decoding.** The ability to apply the rules of phonics to words.

**Derived score.** A score to which raw scores are converted by numerical transformation (e.g., conversion of raw scores to percentile ranks of standard scores).

**Diagnostic test.** A test used to diagnose, analyze, or identify specific areas of weakness and strengths and to determine the nature of weaknesses or deficiencies. Diagnostic achievement tests are used to measure skills.

**Dialect.** A variety of spoken and/or written language that reflects regional and cultural differences.

**Direct instruction.** Instruction that makes the object of the lesson explicit through explanations, modeling, and examples.

**Disorder.** An abnormality of function that impairs performance.

**Dysgraphia.** An impairment in written language that manifests itself in a profound challenge with the fine-motor skills needed for intelligible and efficient handwriting, as well as basic grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and coherence. A diagnosis of dysgraphia presumes that the student has had appropriate opportunities to learn. It is not related to intelligence. Individuals with dysgraphia may be identified as having a specific learning disability in written expression if their challenge adversely affects educational performance.

**Dyslexia.** A language-based learning disability that affects skill in reading. Individuals with dyslexia typically have difficulty with accurate word recognition, fluency, and comprehension

due to a weakness in phonological processing. It is not the result of poor instruction or limited intelligence. The term dyslexia appears in the definition of a specific learning disability.

**Education records.** Student records that are maintained by an educational agency or institution. These records include instructional materials, teacher's manuals, films, tapes, test materials, and protocols.

**Educational consultant.** An individual who may be familiar with school curriculum and requirements at various grade levels who may offer expertise on teaching, disabilities, and assessment.

**Educational diagnostician.** An individual who is trained and licensed to perform evaluations.

**Emotional Disturbance (ED).** Disability category under IDEA. ED includes depression, fears, schizophrenia and adversely affects educational performance.

**English language learner (ELL).** A nonnative speaker of English who is in the process of acquiring English.

**Equivalent form.** See alternate form.

**Executive functioning.** The part of the brain that manages how we take in, store, and retrieve information.

**Expected growth.** The average change in test scores that occurs over a specific time for individuals.

**Expository writing.** Texts that are designed to describe and explain.

**Explicit instruction.** An approach to teaching that is highly structured and systematic. Explicit instruction presents new concepts step by step, clearly establishing linkages between facts, concepts, and ideas.

**Expressive language.** The ability to express one's thoughts orally with grammar, precision, and style.

**Evaluation.** See assessment.

**FAPE.** Free and appropriate public education including special education and related services provided in conformity with an IEP. Services are without charge and meet standards of the SEA.

**FERPA.** Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The federal statute about confidentiality and access to education records.

**Fine motor skill.** Small muscle movements that support speech, handwriting, other activities requiring precision.

**Floor.** The lowest score that a test can reliably measure.

**Fluency.** The ability to read with accuracy, speed, intonation, and phrasing. Fluent reading is necessary to support reading comprehension.

**Fluid reasoning.** The ability to use one's skills to solve novel problems.

**Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA).** The collection and analysis of data that inform about the nature of challenging behaviors in a given environment. An FBA seeks to clarify the reasons for off-task and inappropriate behaviors so that a meaningful intervention can be designed and implemented.

**General curriculum.** Curriculum adopted by LEA or SEA for all children from preschool through high school.

**Grade equivalent.** A way of describing test performance that is based on the average number of correct responses for a given point in the school year in a norming sample. Use with caution.

**Grade norms.** Refers to the comparison between a student's performance on a test and other students of the same grade in the norming sample that serves as the basis for the standard score. See also age norms.

**Grapheme.** Letter and letter combinations that represent speech sounds.

**Gross motor skill.** Large muscle movements that support skills such as walking and running.

**Hearing impairment.** Disability category under IDEA. A permanent or fluctuating impairment in hearing that adversely affects educational performance.

**Highly qualified teacher.** Teachers who are certified or licensed by the state and who demonstrate competence in the subject(s) they teach.

**IDEIA.** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.

**IEP.** Individualized Education Program.

**IFSP.** Individualized Family Service Plan.

**Inclusion.** Practice of educating children with special needs in regular education classrooms in neighborhood schools. See also mainstreaming and least restrictive environment.

**Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE).** An evaluation conducted at parent request when there are concerns regarding school testing. This evaluation is conducted at no charge to the parents.

**Inferential thinking.** The ability to draw conclusions and make connections within a text and to make connections with one's background knowledge.

**Informal evaluation.** The measurement of a student's skill with teacher-made or non-standardized tests.

**Informal reading inventory (IRI).** A type of reading test that consists of word lists and passages of increasing difficulty that are designed to provide levels of reading instruction (frustration, instructional, and independent). Some IRIs are teacher-made, others are published. IRIs that do not provide evidence of reliability and validity should not be used to make high-stakes decisions.

**Intellectual disability.** A disability that is characterized by severe limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviors.

**Intelligence.** A highly controversial and sometimes illusive construct that attempts to define an individual's problem solving abilities or potential for learning.

**Intelligence quotient (IQ).** A statistic that attempts to quantify an individual's problem solving abilities and potential for learning. It was formally based on an individual's mental age divided by his chronological age and multiplied by one hundred.

**Intelligence Tests.** Tests that measure aptitude or intellectual capacities. Examples: Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales, Fifth Edition.

**Interpreting services.** Related service that includes sign and cued language, transcription services, communication access translation for children who are deaf or hearing impaired.

**Interscorer reliability.** A measure that defines the degree to which two evaluators will be able to arrive at the same score when following the instructions for test administration.

**Item.** A question or exercise in a test or assessment.

**Language.** A socially agreed-upon system of written and/or oral symbols that is used to convey information from one individual to another.

**Least restrictive environment (LRE).** Refers to requirement to educate special needs children with children who are not disabled to the maximum extent possible.

**Limited English Proficient (LEP).** A term that is used to describe a nonnative speaker of English.

**Long-term memory.** A stage of memory that holds information for permanent access.



**Mainstreaming.** Practice of placing special needs children in regular classrooms for at least a part of the child's educational program. See also least restrictive environment.

**Mastery Test.** A test that determines whether an individual has mastered a unit of instruction or skill. A test that provides information about what an individual knows, not how his or her performance compares to the norm group.

**Math calculation.** An area of a specific learning disability involving computational skill.

**Math reasoning.** An area of a specific learning disability involving tasks related to word problems, graphs and charts, money, measurement, time, etc.

**Matthew Effects.** A term coined by Keith Stanovich in 1986 that describes how lack of reading experience affects the development of vocabulary, verbal reasoning, and background knowledge. Children who read become better readers. Those who do not read do not.

**Mean.** A type of average. The sum of individual scores divided by the total number of scores. If Sam takes three tests, and he earns scores of 90, 96, and 99, his average score is 95.

**Mechanics.** Capitalization and punctuation.

**Median.** A type of average. The middle score in a distribution or set of ranked scores. The median divides a group into two equal parts. The 50<sup>th</sup> percentile rank. If Sam takes three tests, and he earned scores of 85, 92, and 110, his median score is 92. Medians are less subject to extremes in performance.

**Mediation.** Procedural safeguard to resolve disputes between parents and schools. Must be voluntary and cannot be used to deny or delay right to a due process hearing. Must be conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator who is trained in effective mediation techniques.

**Medical services.** Related service. Includes services provided by a licensed physical to determine a child's medically related disability that results in the child's need for special education and related services.

**Mental Retardation.** See intellectual disability.

**Mode.** The score that occurs most often in a distribution.

**Modification(s).** The adaptation of a task in order to lessen its difficulty. Substantial changes in what the student is expected to demonstrate. Includes changes in instructional level, content, and performance criteria, and may include changes in test form or format. Includes alternate assessment.

**Morphology.** The study of word structure and the meaningful parts of words.

**Multiple disabilities.** Disability category under IDEA. The concomitant impairments (such as cognitive impairment –blindness, cognitive impairment-orthopedic impairment, etc.) that cause such severe educational problems that problems cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. Does not include deaf-blindness.

**Multisensory.** Refers to tasks that involve more than one sense - visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or tactile.

**Narrative writing.** Writing that tells a story.

**Native language.** The language used in the home by the parents.

**Neurology.** The study of diseases that involve the central nervous system.

**Neuropsychology.** The study of the structure and the function of the brain as related to psychological processes and behaviors.

**Nonliteral language.** Language in which the meaning is not directly stated.

**Nonverbal.** Without language, oral or written.

**Nonverbal learning disability.** A disorder in spatial thinking, gross motor, and fine motor skills that affects the development of social skills, higher-level language skills, written expression, and math.

**Nonverbal intelligence tests.** Tests that are designed to permit students to demonstrate their problem solving skills and abilities through tasks that do not require language.

**Normal distribution.** A distribution of scores used to scale a test. A normal distribution curve is a bell-shaped curve with most scores in the middle and a small number of scores at the low and high ends.

**Normative sample.** A well-defined group of individuals that are selected to reflect the demographic characteristics (age, gender, grade, income, disability, etc) of the U.S. population that is used to scale a test.

**Norm group.** See normative sample.

**Norms.** Refers to “normative sample.” See age norms or grade norms.

**Objectives.** Stated, desirable, measurable outcomes of education.

**Occupational therapy.** Related service that includes therapy to remediate fine motor skills.

**OCR.** Office for Civil Rights.

**Orientation and mobility services.** Related service. Includes services to visually impaired students that enable students to move safely at home, school, and in the community.

**Orthographic processing.** Refers to the ability to visualize the writing system of a language. It includes spelling, the representation of numbers, punctuation, and assorted symbols.

**Orthopedic impairment.** Disability category under IDEA, orthopedic impairment that adversely affects child's educational performance.

**OSEP.** Office of Special Education Programs.

**Other Health Impairment (OHI).** Disability category under IDEA. OHI refers to limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems that adversely affects educational performance.

**Out-of-Level Testing.** Means assessing students in one grade level using versions of tests that were designed for students in other (usually lower) grade levels. May not assess the same content standards at the same levels as are assessed in the grade-level assessment.

**Paraprofessional.** An individual employed in a public school who is supervised by a certified or licensed teacher; includes individuals who work in language instruction, educational programs, special education, and migrant education.

**Parent.** A legal guardian or other person standing in loco parentis, a grandparent, or stepparent with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the welfare of the child.

**Parent counseling and training.** Related service that refers to helping parents understand their child's special needs, providing information about child development, and helping parents acquire skills to support their child.

**Percentiles (percentile rank).** Percentage of scores that fall below a point on a score distribution. For example, a score at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile indicates that 75% of students obtained that score or lower.

**Perceptual reasoning.** The ability to perceive relationships, recognize patterns, and draw conclusions based on abstract geometric designs and meaningful pictures.

**Performance Standards.** Definitions of what a child must do to demonstrate proficiency at specific levels in content standards.

**Phoneme.** The smallest unit of speech that determines meaning.

**Phonemic awareness.** An awareness of individual speech sounds in words.

**Phonics.** The study of how the sound patterns of language are represented by letter symbols.

**Phonological awareness.** An awareness of the sound patterns of oral language.

**Phonology.** The study of the sound system of language.

**Physical therapy.** Related service that includes therapy to remediate gross motor skills.

**Portfolio assessment.** A collection of work samples that provides evidence of progress and learning. Can be designed to reflect achievement and effort.

**Power test.** Measures performance unaffected by speed of response. Time is not critical, items usually arranged in order of increasing difficulty.

**Pragmatics.** The ability to use language appropriately and effectively to achieve one's goals.

**Prior written notice.** Required written notice to parents when the school proposes to initiate or change, or refuses to initiate or change, the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child.

**Probe.** A brief test, typically 1 to 5 minutes in duration, that is used to measure progress over time on a frequent basis.

**Processing deficits.** Weaknesses in cognitive functioning that may compromise an individual's skill in academic tasks or problem solving.

**Processing speed.** The ability to make small decisions, often visual in nature, and record them with pencil while being timed.

**Proficient.** Solid academic performance for the grade, demonstrates competence in subject matter.

**Profile.** A collective representation of an individual's scores on several tests or subtests. May be presented graphically and allows for easy identification of strengths or weaknesses across several different tests or subtests.

**Progress monitoring.** A scientifically based practice used to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Can be implemented with individual students or an entire class.

**Protocol.** The form provided by the publisher that evaluators use to record a student's performance on particular test.

**Psychiatry.** A branch of medicine that involves the study and treatment of mental disorders.

**Psychological services.** Related service that includes administering psychological and educational tests, interpreting test results, and interpreting child behavior related to learning.

**Psychology.** The study of the mind, mental processes, and behaviors.

**Qualified examiner.** A professional who is certified and/or licensed to evaluate certain types of disabilities and who is trained in the administration of the tests needed to do so.

**Rapid automatic naming (RAN).** The ability to name pictured objects, colors, letters, and/or numbers while being timed. Some believe that rapid naming is a measure of executive functioning.

**Raw score.** The points earned by a student on a test for correct responses. Raw scores are converted to standard scores, percentile ranks, grade equivalents, and age equivalents.

**Reading.** A complex system of deriving meaning from print that requires all of the following:

The skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes, or speech sounds, are connected to print.

The ability to decode unfamiliar words.

The ability to read fluently.

Sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension.

The development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from print.

The development and maintenance of a motivation to read.

**Receptive language.** The ability to understand language as it is used by others.

**Recreation.** Related service that includes therapeutic recreation services, recreation programs, and leisure education.

**Reevaluation.** An evaluation that is repeated after an agreed upon interval in order to determine present levels of functioning and progress.

**Rehabilitation Act of 1973.** Civil rights statute designed to protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination. The purposes are to maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, inclusion, and integration into society.

**Rehabilitation counseling services.** Includes career development, preparation for employment, and vocational rehabilitation series.

**Related services.** Services that are necessary for a child to benefit from special education. Includes speech-language pathology and audiology services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, counseling, orientation and mobility services, school health series, social work series, parent counseling and training.

**Reliability.** The consistency with which a test measures the area being tested. It describes the extent to which a test is dependable, stable, and consistent. There are different types of reliability: test-retest, internal consistency, and alternate form. In order for a test to be valid, it must provide results that are reliable.

**Remediation.** Process by which an individual receives instruction and practice in skills that are weak or nonexistent in an effort to develop/strengthen these skills.

**Response to intervention (RTI).** The use of research-based instruction and intervention to students who are at risk and who are suspected of having specific learning disabilities. The degree to which students benefit (or fail to benefit) from changes in instruction that are designed to improve performance.

**Scaled score.** A type of standard score with a range of 1 to 19 (or 20), a mean of 10, and a standard deviation of 3.

**School health services.** Related service. Services provided by a qualified school nurse or other qualified person.

**Scientifically based research.** Research that applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable, valid knowledge about education activities and programs.

**Score.** A specific number that describes a level of skill that results from the administration of a test.

**Screening.** A brief assessment that determines the need for further testing.

**Semantics.** The study of word meanings and how words combine to create meaning

**Sensory processing.** The ability to take in information through one's senses - seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling.

**Sequential processing.** The ability to take in and recall items in order.

**Short-term memory.** A temporary buffer zone where new learning is stored in memory for not more than a few seconds.

**Spatial processing.** The ability to process what we see.

**Special education.** Specifically designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.

**Specific Learning Disability (SLD).** Disability category under IDEA that includes disorders that affect the ability to understand or use spoken or written language. May include difficulties with listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, and doing mathematical calculations.

**Speech.** Oral language.

**Speech or language impairment.** Disability category under IDEA. Includes communication disorders, language impairments, voice impairments that adversely affect educational performance.

**Standard deviation (SD).** A measure of how scores spread out from the mean. The more the scores cluster about the mean, the smaller the SD. If the scoring system has a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of plus or minus 15, then the scores from 85 to 115 will capture about two-thirds of the population.

**Standard error of measurement (SEM).** A statistic provided by test publishers that describes the reliability or consistency of a test. Because no tests are perfectly reliable, scores are interpreted with a plus or minus value, a standard error. SEM varies from test to test, from subtest to subtest, and by age/grade of the students tested.

**Standard score (SS).** This term has two meanings. A standard score on a norm-referenced test is based on the bell curve and its distribution of scores from the average or mean. Standard scores are useful because they allow for comparison between students and comparisons of one student over time. A standard score may also refer to a scoring system with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15.

**Standardization.** A process that ensures that test content and the rules for administering a test are clearly defined so all examiners administer the test in the same way. The purpose of standardization is to ensure that all individuals are assessed under the same conditions.

**Standardization sample.** The group of individuals that provides the standard of performance when a test is standardized. Also called the “norm group.”

**Standardized test.** A test that is uniformly developed, administered, and scored. The term is often used interchangeably with a norm-referenced test. All norm-referenced tests are standardized.

**Standards.** Statements that describe what students are expected to know and do in each grade and subject areas. Includes content standards, performance standards, and benchmarks.

**Stanine.** A standard score with a range of 1 to 9, a mean of 5, and a standard deviation of 1.97.

**Strength.** An ability or skill that is above average and significantly better than other abilities that a child may have.

**Structural analysis.** The application of syllable patterns and knowledge of word structure in order to decode words.

**Subtest.** Part of a test that measures a specific area such as word identification or reading comprehension.

**Supplementary aids and services.** Aids, services, and supports provided in regular education classes so children with disabilities can be educated with nondisabled children.

**Syllabication.** The process by which multi-syllable words are broken into syllables so that they can be sounded out.

**Syntax.** The study of sentence structure

**T-score.** A standard score with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10.

**Test.** A collection of questions that may be divided into subtests that measure abilities in an area or in several areas.

**Test bias.** The difference in test scores that is attributable to demographic variables (e.g. gender, ethnicity, and age).

**Test procedures.** The rules for administering a test.

**Test-retest reliability.** The consistency of a test over repeated administrations.

**Testing-to-the-limits.** The practice of administering additional test items or altering the standard rules for administration after the test has been completed with the goal of learning additional information about a student's performance. Testing-to-the-limits provides qualitative information only; scores may not be interpreted.

**Top.** A term that refers to the more challenging or difficult items on a test. When a test has a sufficient top, it permits evaluators to distinguish between extremely high levels of functioning and merely high levels of functioning.

**Transition services.** IEP requirement designed to facilitate movement from school to the workplace or to higher education.

**Transportation.** Related service about travel that includes specialized equipment (i.e., special or adapted buses, lifts, and ramps) if required to provide special transportation for a child with a disability.

**True score.** The average score obtained by a student if the test could be administered an infinite number of times.

**T-score.** A type of standard score with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10.

**Universal screening.** Testing designed to identify children at risk for learning as part of Response to Intervention (RTI).



**U.S.C.** United States Code.

**Validity.** The degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure and the extent to which inferences and actions made on the basis of test scores are appropriate and accurate.

**Verbal.** Related to language.

**Visual.** That which can be seen by the eye.

**Visual impairment.** Disability category under IDEA that refers to impaired vision that adversely affects educational performance. Includes blindness.

**Visual-motor.** The ability to coordinate the hand with the eye.

**Vocabulary.** Words that students must know to read effectively.

**Weakness.** A below average score that stands out in contrast to better-developed skills.

**Word attack.** The application of phonics skills to words.

**Word recognition.** Identifying words that may or may not follow the rules of phonics.

**Working memory.** A cognitive workspace or blackboard where new learning is compared, contrasted, and integrated with background knowledge.

**Z-score.** A type of standard score with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.