



Why Test?

Accountability has been the buzzword in education for the past several years. Both public and private schools have adopted evaluation as a way to demonstrate success to their Boards of Education, the congregation or community, parents, and governmental agencies. In some cases, continued public funding is dependent on a particular school's performance. Getting a high school diploma may be linked to passing a test mandated by the state. Testing has truly become "high stakes."

Tests and test design should be matched to the purpose for testing. Norm referenced tests, such as the standardized achievement tests, have

been developed to compare a student's performance against what is considered "normal" for the entire population. Test publishers select a sample of children to be tested to develop the norms. They use recent census figures to decide which children should be included in the sample. They match the percentage of children in the sample to various categories, such as ethnic background, primary language,



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financial status, rural or urban, presence of various disabilities, and location of residence to the percentages in the census. Test publishers usually include thousands of children of various ages in the norming process. The scores of norm referenced tests usually follow the pattern of the Bell Curve, with some children on the high end, some children on the low end, and most of the children in the middle.

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Behavior? No Problem!

Many of the students we come in contact with in our classrooms come from a home environment we can't even begin to comprehend. Broken homes, poverty situations, and living in tough neighborhoods only skims the top of possible turmoil these children may face on a daily basis. Keeping this in mind, it becomes clear why these children may display "inappropriate" school behavior. As an educator, it becomes our job to get these children to realize these behaviors are not acceptable in the school environment, along with getting

them to take responsibility for their behavior. When dealing with difficult situations it is very important to keep some things in mind:

- You need to teach two (2) sets of rules. For example, how many times have we heard the line, "If they hit me, I am going to hit them back." Being Christian Day School Teachers, we often tend to respond with, "I hope you wouldn't do that. God does not want us to hit, etc." By doing this we are discrediting what they are

being taught at home and are asking them to go against what their parents have taught them. Instead, we need to reply with, "That may be how you have to do things at home, but here at school that behavior is not acceptable." By answering this way, we acknowledge that at home, they may need to act a certain way and go into "survival" mode.

- To have an effective discipline program where a student moves toward self-

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Criterion referenced tests are designed to measure a child's mastery of subject matter to a certain benchmark. In theory, it doesn't matter how long it takes for a child to master long division, the child receives credit when the task has been mastered.

In reality, we expect that most children should be ready to graduate from high school before the age of twenty, and some states have established checkpoints to monitor accountability. In some states, if a child in third grade is not reading at near third grade level, the child is automatically retained. Criterion referenced tests are best used to guide instruction.

A spelling pre-test tells the teacher and the child what words need extra study. A math quiz midway through a unit of instruction might tell the student and the teacher which concepts need re-teaching before the unit test is administered. Our task as educators is not to cover the material but to uncover the information in the material.

Some tests are designed to be administered in groups, some tests are administered individually. Again, the choice depends on the purpose. A group test measures overall performance and identifies areas of need according to subtests. An individual test measures performance, but also might provide information regarding how the student approaches a problem. A group test would tell you that the child is having difficulty mastering phonics. An individual test might catch that the child is sounding out from right to left, backwards for someone who is right handed, but natural for some left-handed children. The problem isn't solved by re-teaching letter sound, but by teaching the child to sound out left to right. Children's attention to task can be more easily monitored during individual tests.

Tests might be selected and ad-

ministered appropriately, but the interpretation of such results might also affect accountability reporting. Last June at a workshop for public school administrators, it was taught how to identify the children in a school who just missed getting into the next highest category of scores (children were rated 1, 2, 3, or 4). Administrators were encouraged to focus the most intensive remediation to those borderline children, to possibly boost them into the next higher category, and this would make the school grades look better. A school might skew results by welcoming only children who are functioning at grade level or above. High stakes testing has moved some educators into a very competitive mode.

Grade equivalents and age equivalents are often a source of pride for parents and teachers. "My fourth grade child is performing at ninth grade level!!!" Does that mean that the child could do algebra at a ninth grade level without being taught algebra? Hmmmmmm. . . Grade and age equivalents simply mean that the child earned as many points correct as the average ninth grader. The child was a very careful worker with fourth grade material, and may have had enough insight to make some lucky guesses. Remember when we used to refer to multiple choice as a test that was "multiple guess?"

Assessment is needed if we are to examine our current standing and to improve what we do for children, but test results are only one small part of the picture of the whole child. As adults, the grade point average of our friends and co-workers is irrelevant. We respect them for their kindness, willingness to help, sense of responsibility, productivity whatever their career choice, and positive attitude. We treasure them most when they offer to pray for us. The best use of testing for children is to help us learn how to make school learning easier for them.

Frontal Lobes of the Brain and Learning

- Frontal lobes (left and right) are located at the front of the cortex (behind the forehead) and are the largest lobes in the cerebrum. They may be considered the most advanced part of our brain.
- Frontal lobes are part of a broad network with connections to almost all parts of the nervous system; therefore, possibly all cognitive systems are sensitive to the frontal lobes. The connection is in terms of executive functioning (ability to explore, monitor and shift the direction of attention, initiate and direct language, organize methods of memorization, and discriminate [temporarily] items in memory (the frontal lobes are thought to be the “seat” of our working memory).
- Frontal lobes are the control center and home to our personality; also plays a critical role in those areas that are special to the human species, such as reasoning, planning, attention, creativity, logic, learning from experience, and intuition. Frontal lobes are also thought to be responsible for: paying attention to a task, making good decisions, planning ahead, learning and remembering what we have learned, and helping us to behave properly in a given situation; i.e., areas that are vital to success in almost all areas of life.
- There is no other part of the brain where lesions can cause such a wide variety of symptoms; the frontal lobes receive information from almost all other brain regions and integrates multiple types of information; similar to a CEO of a large company.
- Frontal lobe damage seems to have an impact on divergent thinking, or flexibility and problem solving, and may also interfere with attention span.
- One of the most common characteristics of frontal lobe damage is difficulty interpreting feedback from the environment.
- Frontal lobe damage may cause social behavior issues such as: perseverating on a response, risk-taking, non-compliance with rules, and using external cues to guide behavior. Frontal lobes are also thought to play a part in spatial orientation and motor function.
- Frontal lobes may play a paramount role in ability to appreciate humor and have a good “belly laugh”; impaired ability to smile at funny cartoons or verbal jokes.
- Frontal lobes can be stimulated through tasks such as basic math, reading and writing can stimulate the frontal lobes; also games like Concentration, board games, Legos, beads, models, etc; games that teach patience and focus; and activities such as tae-kwon-do, chess and playing a musical instrument.



“Bring every man up to his full potential in Christ Jesus.”

- Colossians 1:28

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governance you must have structure and choice. You must clearly communicate expected behavior and probable consequences of not choosing those behaviors. Students must be led to realize that they always have a choice- to follow or not to follow the expected behavior. With each choice comes a consequence-either desirable or not desirable (Payne, 78).

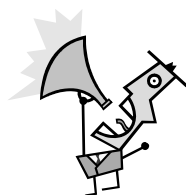
To help educators understand and deal with these behavior situations, Payne encourages teachers to do a behavior analysis mentally, or in writing. By answering these questions, you will be better able to come up with strategies to better help the student.

Behavior Analysis

1. What kind of behavior does this child need to be successful?
2. Does the child have the resources to develop this behavior?
3. Will it help to contact the parent?
4. Are resources available through the parents?
5. What resources are available through the school/district?
6. How will the behaviors be taught?
7. What are other choices the child could make?

8. What will help the child repeat successful behaviors?

Another important element to this is to get the student to analyze his/her behavior. This is done by having the student complete the questionnaire below. I have my lower students who struggle with writing dictate their answers to me. Once the questionnaire is complete, you can then discuss with the student other choices that could have been made that are more appropriate for the school environment. Many students don't realize that there are other ways of dealing with the situation. Many automatically go into "survival" mode. By filling out the questionnaire, and then by discussing it with you, the student begins to realize that there are a wide variety of choices he/she has use to in those kinds of situations.



Finally, when dealing with these situations you need to make sure you are modeling the use of an adult voice (the voice of negotiation). The three types of voices are Child Voice, Parent Voice, and The Adult Voice..

Child Voice – Defensive, victimized,

emotional, whining, losing attitude, etc.

The Parent Voice – Authoritative, judgmental, win-lose mentality, punitive, etc.

The Adult Voice – Non-judgmental, free of negative non-verbal, often in question format, promotes win-win situation.

In classroom discussions use the Adult Voice. Direct-teach the concept and give them exact phrases to use. Here are some examples of phrases you can teach them:

- ✦ In what ways could this be resolved?
- ✦ I would like to recommend _____.
- ✦ What are the choices in this situation?
- ✦ I am comfortable (uncomfortable) with _____
- ✦ Options that could be considered are _____.
- ✦ For me to be comfortable I need _____.
- ✦ These are the consequences of that choice _____.
- ✦ We agree to disagree.

Students will soon realize that the Adult Voice is necessary in and out of school, and can be used in place of physical aggression.

This information came from Ruby K. Payne's A Framework for Understanding Poverty.

Name: _____

Student Questionnaire

1. What did you do? _____
2. When you did that, what did you want? _____
3. List four other things you could have done.
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
4. What will you do differently next time? _____

Helping the Struggling Student By Adapting Reading Material

One of the biggest challenges in a classroom with diverse learners is making it possible for the struggling students to learn material that is written above their reading or comprehension level. This article provides some suggestions to simplify existing materials.

Simplifying material can include the following adaptations:

- Rewriting materials in a simplified format
- Providing summaries of material
- Developing study guides or reading guides to provide support and break information down into smaller pieces

When rewriting materials or developing summaries, the teacher must ask these questions:

- “What is the most essential information I want the student to learn from this section of the textbook or literature selection?”
- “What is the student realistically capable of learning and remembering?”
- “What type of wording must I use to simplify the reading level of the material?”

The answers to those questions should guide the teacher in developing a summary or simplified version of the material. Since this task is time-consuming, check with the publisher of the textbook to see what resources the company has produced for differentiated instruction. Most current texts provide adaptations of some type. If this is not possible, check with teachers who have used or are using the same text to see if they have materials available that will meet these needs. (Simplifying curriculum materials is also a good summer project!)

Study guides or reading guides are a benefit for all students. They provide the necessary support for the struggling student while teaching good study skills to the average and above average student. A reading guide breaks down each section or chapter of a book into smaller parts by asking questions

pertaining only to that particular section. The reading guides can be used as a review for a cumulative test and can be used by the teacher as test questions.

A study guide is used as a review for a test. To encourage good study habits, it should be given a few days before a test and should include very specific information as to what will be included on the test. Some teachers have developed study guides that are in a question format that require short answer responses (and include the same questions that will be on the test.) If these study guides are given as an assignment and graded, they can also be used as part of the test grade by simply averaging the test score and the study guide score and counting that

as the final test score. This method relieves some of the stress of test taking for the student who studies hard, but then freezes on a test. It also provides an incentive for good study habits for all students.

Writing summaries, reading guides, and study guides are definitely time consuming for the teacher. But when such materials are provided, all students are given an equal chance to succeed and to learn to the best of their ability.



MATH SCAVENGER HUNT



Can you find something in the room, or someone who is wearing:

1. Triangles  _____

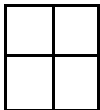
2. Squares  _____

3. Rectangles  _____

4. Circles  _____

5. Circles and squares   _____

6. Hexagons  _____

7. A tessellating pattern?  _____
(a repeating pattern with no gaps)

8. 3 x 2?  _____