

Glossary of Assessment Terms

Accommodations

Changes in the administration of an assessment, such as setting, scheduling, timing, presentation format, response mode, or others, including any combination of these that does not change the construct intended to be measured by the assessment or the meaning of the resulting scores. Accommodations are used for equity, not advantage, and serve to level the playing field. To be appropriate, assessment accommodations must be identified in the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 plan and used regularly during instruction and classroom assessment.

Accountability

The use of assessment results and other data to ensure that schools are moving in desired directions. Common elements include standards, indicators of progress toward meeting those standards, analysis of data, reporting procedures, and rewards or sanctions.

Adequate yearly progress (AYP)

A provision of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) legislation requiring schools, districts, and states to demonstrate on the basis of test scores that students are making academic progress based on test scores.

Alignment

The similarity or match between or among content standards, performance standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments in terms of knowledge and skill expectations.

Alternate assessment

An instrument used in gathering information on the standards-based performance and progress of students whose disabilities preclude their valid and reliable participation in general assessments. Alternate assessments measure the performance of a relatively small population of students who are unable to participate in the general assessment system, with or without accommodations as determined by the IEP Team.

Assessment

The process of collecting information about individuals, groups, or systems that relies upon a number of instruments, one of which may be a test. Therefore, assessment is a more comprehensive term than *test*.

Benchmarks

A specific statement of knowledge and skills within a content area's continuum that a student must possess to demonstrate a level of progress toward mastery of a standard.

Constructed response item

When examinees must create their own response to an assessment item rather than choosing one from a list of given responses.

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Content Standards

A statement of a broad goal describing expectations for students in a subject matter at a particular grade or at the completion of a level of schooling (i.e., what students show know and be able to do).

Criterion-referenced tests (CRT)

A standardized test that allows its users to make score interpretations in relation to a functional performance level, rather than in relation to the performance of others (i.e., determines whether individual students have achieved specific skills or concepts).

Curriculum

The knowledge and skills that are taught to a student.

Curriculum-based assessments (instructionally supportive tests)

Assessments that mirror instructional materials and procedures related to the curriculum resulting in an ongoing process of monitoring progress in the curriculum and guiding adjustments in instruction, remediation, accommodations, or modifications provided to the student.

Extended standards

A content standard that has been expanded while maintaining the essence of that standard, thereby ensuring that all students with significant cognitive disabilities have access to, and make progress in, the general curriculum.

High stakes testing

A test for which important consequences are attached to the results for students, teachers, schools, districts, and/or states. Consequences may include promotion, graduation, rewards, or sanctions.

Large-scale assessments

Tests that are administered simultaneously to large groups of students within the district or state.

Norm-referenced tests (NRT)

A standardized test designed, validated, and implemented to rank a students' performance by comparing that performance to the performance of that student's peers (i.e., ranks each student with respect to the achievement of others in broad areas of knowledge).

Glossary of Assessment Terms (contd.)

Performance assessment

A task or series of tasks requiring a student to provide a response or create a product to show mastery of a specific skill or content standard.

Reliability

The degree to which test scores for an individual or group of test takers are consistent over repeated administrations, and therefore, can be inferred to be dependable, replicable and relatively free of errors of measurement.

Rubric

A scoring tool based on a set of criteria used to evaluate a student's test performance. The criteria contain a description of the requirements for varying degrees of success in responding to the question or performing the task. Rubrics may be diagnostic or analytic (providing ratings of multiple criteria), or they may be holistic (describing a single, global trait).

Standardized

An established procedure that assures that a test is administered with the same directions, and under the same conditions (time limits, etc.) and is scored in the same manner for all students to ensure the comparability of scores. Standardization allows reliable and valid comparisons to be made among students taking the test. The two major types of standardized tests are norm-referenced (NRT) and criterion-referenced (CRT).

Standards-based assessments

Assessments constructed to measure how well students have mastered specific content standards or skills.

Glossary of Assessment Terms (contd.)

Validity

The extent to which a test measures what it was designed to measure. Validity is not inherent to the test, but applies to the purpose(s) for which the test is to be used. Multiple types of validity exist. Common types of validity include the following:

- **Consequential validity:** The extent to which score-based inferences obtained by the assessment have positive/negative or intended/unintended consequences (e.g., does the implementation of a testing program result in more or less appropriate or inappropriate instructional practices).
- **Construct validity:** The extent to which the assessment measures the underlying characteristic or trait it purports to measure. Many psychometricians consider *Construct Validity* to be the organizing structure for all validity evidence.
- **Content validity:** The extent to which the content of the assessment represents the entire domain (breadth and depth) of knowledge, skills and instructional objectives the test is intended to measure.
- **Face validity:** The extent to which content on the test is believed to measure what the test purports to measure by the range of users.
- **Instructional validity:** The extent to which the content of the assessment represents what is being taught in the classroom. *Instructional Validity* is closely related to *Opportunity to Learn*.
- **Predictive validity:** The extent to which scores on the assessment may be used to predict an external criterion obtained at a later time (e.g., other test scores, college/workforce readiness.).

References:

Council of Chief State School Officers (2003). *Glossary of Assessment Terms and Acronyms Used in Assessing Special Education Students*. Retrieved from <http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/AESSCASSGlossary.pdf>

Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. (1999) Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.