



HANDOUT: FOUR TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

There are four general types of assessments. Literacy programs may use one type or a combination of types to meet different needs.

Standardized Tests

These tests are similar to the standardized tests given in schools. They provide a snapshot of the learner's reading and writing abilities. They usually give results in terms of grade-level equivalents and may include more detailed diagnostic information. The standardized tests mentioned earlier have many iterations, so they can be given multiple times. The difference in scores is an easy way to demonstrate progress. The focus of standardized tests is illustrated by the statement "The results of the test indicate the learner can read and write as well as the average learner in grade _____."

Materials-based Assessment

This form of assessment helps determine where to place a learner in a specific set of instructional materials, and then continues to measure how well the learner has learned the skills taught in the materials. Many published materials will have an initial placement test, periodic checkups like you might find at the end of a chapter, and a final assessment which covers the skills learned through the entire series and provides guidance as to whether the learner is ready to move to the next level. Materials-based assessments are rarely applicable to other materials. However, because published materials are usually correlated to reading grade levels, a program may use a standardized test as a generic placement tool for multiple materials; or they may use a placement tool for published materials to get a broad assessment of the learner's reading level. The focus of materials-based assessments is illustrated by the statement: "The learner has mastered the skills taught in the following materials_____."

Competency-based Assessment

This kind of assessment measures a person's ability to apply basic skills to accomplish specific tasks in functional contexts, such as reading calendars, maps, traffic signs, and newspaper ads. The individual tasks are usually associated with a longer-term goal, and checklists are often used as a way to show progress toward that goal. For example, if a learner wants to get their driver's license, a checklist for a competency-based assessment might include:

- learner read the driver's manual
learner was able to identify traffic signs by shape
- learner was able to explain right of way

Competency-based assessment is best summed up with this sentence: "The learner is able to use his or her reading and writing skills to perform the following functional tasks:..."

Performance Assessment

Performance assessment focuses on why the learner came to the program, what the learner wants to do with his or her new skills, and how the learner currently uses these skills in his or her own life. Performance assessment involves the learner and tutor in conversations about the learner's changes in literacy behaviors and the use of literacy skills inside and outside of the classroom. The focus of performance assessment is summed up with this sentence: "The learner has used his or her new skills (such as reading, writing, math) in the following ways:"