Assessing students with SpLDs
6/4/2024

Q: What type of assessment activities do you usually give your students and especially with those who experience learning difficulties?

A: Most often teachers use the following types of assessment:

- Fill in the blanks (Completion)
- Choose the correct answer (Multiple choice activities)
- Answer the questions (Reading comprehension questions)
- Write a paragraph / an essay / a letter / a report / an article
- Matching activities
- Speaking activities

But in fact, we need all-purpose communicative assessments!

Communicative assessment is a method of determining our students' over-all proficiencies in English. It is considered to be more beneficial to the students as it gives practical feedback about real language use in real life situations.

Principles of differentiated assessment

Differentiated assessment leads to…

- enhanced student learning
- incorporation of new knowledge
- better understanding
- use of different skills

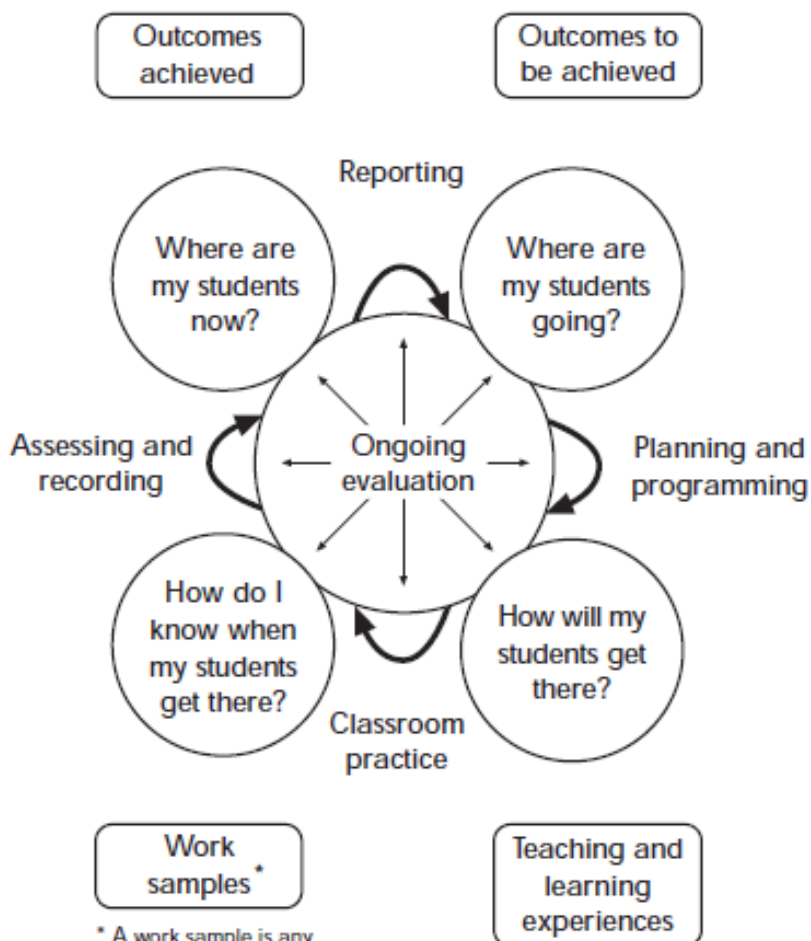**Differentiated assessment involves…**

- data collection before, during and after teaching
- identification of a student's needs and strengths
- data collection in order to plan a differentiated teaching approach
- individualized feedback
- accommodation of the students' needs
- teacher-made tests, checklists of traits and characteristics, standardized achievement tests ★
- self-reflection, use of portfolios and learning journals

★ Standardized achievement tests

- **PALS: Pre-K** (Literacy screening test that measures preschoolers' developing knowledge of important literacy fundamentals)
- **TERA-3** (Measures reading ability of young children aged 3.5 – 8.5 years old.)
- **PIPA** (Measures a child's phonological awareness skills of children)
- **CTOPP-2** (A comprehensive instrument designed to assess phonological awareness, phonological memory and rapid naming)
- **DIBELS** (A set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through 6th grade)
- **Rosner Test of Auditory Analysis** (Evaluates the child's ability to identify the separate sounds in spoken words)
- **Action Picture Test**
- **Test of Reception of Grammar 2 (TROG – 2)**
- **Degrees of Reading Power**
- **ERDA** (Identifies children at risk for reading difficulty or failure)
- **GORT4** (Provides an efficient and objective measure of growth in oral reading and an aid in the diagnosis of oral reading difficulties)
- **TPRI** (Identifies at-risk students and diagnoses instructional needs)
- **Test of Word Reading Efficiency, 2nd edition**

The teaching and learning cycle

Outcomes achieved

Outcomes to be achieved

Reporting

Where are my students now?

Where are my students going?

Assessing and recording

Ongoing evaluation

Planning and programming

How do I know when my students get there?

How will my students get there?

Classroom practice

Work samples *

* A work sample is any demonstration of student achievement

Teaching and learning experiences

From: *A guide for school literacy support teams: Part of Literacy Linkages*

Question-Answer Relationship

This strategy helps students understand the different types of questions. By learning that the answers to several questions are "Right There", that some answers require the students to "Think and Search" and that some answers can only be answered "On My Own" students (and especially those with Learning Difficulties) soon recognize that they must first consider the question before answering.

Why is it "vital" for your students to use it?
- It improves students' reading comprehension.
- It teachers students how to ask questions about what they read and where to find the answers to these questions.
- It helps students to think beyond the text.
- It inspires students to think creatively.
- Students use their higher-level thinking skills.

"Right There": Literal questions whose answers can be found in the text. Most often the words used in the question are the same words found in the text.

"Think and Search": The answers are gathered from several parts of the text and put together to make meaning.

"Author and You": These questions are based on information provided in the text but the student is required to relate it to his / her own experience. Although the answer does not lie directly in the text, the student must have read it in order to answer the question.

"On My Own": These questions do not require the student to have read the passage but he / she must use their background or prior knowledge to answer the question.

CONDUCTING A LANGUAGE EVALUATION

- Conduct hearing and vision screenings.
- Obtain relevant information from the parents: concerns about communication skills, developmental history, etc.
- Information must be gathered from two educators – the student's classroom teacher as well as another professional. For preschoolers, obtain this information from childcare providers or other adults who see the child outside of the family structure.
- Obtain information from teachers related to progress in the general curriculum, communication skills, behavior and social interactions. General curriculum for preschoolers is developmentally appropriate activities.
- Review school records, e.g. grades, test scores, special education files, documentation of prereferral strategies/interventions, and discipline and attendance records.
- Select and administer at least one comprehensive norm-referenced test that is appropriate for the student's age and yields receptive, expressive, and total language quotients whenever possible.

- Obtain information about the student's functional communication skills.
- Use standardized measures and/or a language sample to assess:
  - morphology: the understanding and usage of word endings, inflections, prefixes, suffixes, and compound words.
  - syntax: the set of rules, which govern how words, phrases, and clauses are combined to form sentences, mean length of utterance.
  - language content or semantics: the manner in which words and word relationships represent one's knowledge and ideas about the world of objects and events, total number of words.
- Assess pragmatic language skills: understanding and using language in communicative interactions.
- Assess auditory attention, discrimination, memory, sequencing, association, and integration using formal or informal instruments.
- Consider play skills when evaluating preschool children since:
  - the developmental level of play reflects underlying cognitive knowledge, and
  - play provides a social context for interaction and language learning.
- Interview the student, when appropriate, to determine his/her perception of communication abilities and difficulties especially as related to classroom and other educational settings. Probe the student's awareness and use of strategies that s/he has attempted and probe for self-evaluation of their effectiveness.
- Document how the student's language impairment adversely affects educational performance in the classroom or the learning environment. For preschoolers, document how it adversely affects their ability to participate in developmentally appropriate activities.

(Source: Assessment of language impairment)

Teacher Input—Language

Student: _____ School: _____ Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

Your observations of the above student's language will help determine if a language problem adversely affects educational performance. Check all age-appropriate items that have been observed. Please return this completed form to the Speech-Language Therapist

Listening—Auditory Processing—Memory—Receptive Language

The student:	Yes	No	Sometimes
• Can follow verbal directions during	____	____	____
o Individual instruction	____	____	____
o Group instruction	____	____	____
• Can follow classroom routines	____	____	____
• Requires clarification and/or repetition of directions	____	____	____
• Uses appropriate listening/attending skills	____	____	____
• Comprehends verbal information provided in class	____	____	____
• Answers questions appropriately	____	____	____
• Can ignore auditory distractions	____	____	____
• Retains new information	____	____	____
• Recalls old information	____	____	____
• Comprehends simple sentence structures	____	____	____
• Comprehends complex sentence structure	____	____	____
o Passive voice (The boy was followed by the dog)	____	____	____
o Relative clauses (the cake that Joy ate)	____	____	____
o Pronoun reference (he = Billy)	____	____	____

Semantics—Concepts

The student:	Yes	No	Sometimes
• Can predict outcomes	____	____	____
• Can draw inference	____	____	____
• Recognizes different uses of words, depending on context	____	____	____
o Recognizes meanings of antonyms and synonyms	____	____	____
o Recognizes multiple meaning (fly: a fly, to fly)	____	____	____
o Recognizes figurative language (hold your horses)	____	____	____
o Differentiates homonyms (road—road)	____	____	____
o Understands temporal (before/after), position (above/below), and quantitative (more/several) concepts.	____	____	____

Expressive Language

The student:	Yes	No	Sometimes
• Expresses ideas effectively	____	____	____
• Uses sentence structure and grammar that is appropriate for age/grade	____	____	____
• Asks WH- questions	____	____	____
• Expresses a logical sequence of ideas to tell a story or relate event	____	____	____
• Uses age-appropriate vocabulary	____	____	____
• Speaks with appropriate rte, volume, pitch and voice quality	____	____	____
o Uses age-appropriate speech sounds	____	____	____

Social Communication/Pragmatics

The student:	Yes	No	Sometimes
• Participates in discussions	____	____	____
• Can carry on a meaningful conversation with adults and peers	____	____	____
• Begins, maintains, and ends conversation appropriately	____	____	____
• Makes relevant comments about the topic	____	____	____
• Understands humor, idioms, and other figurative language	____	____	____
• Attends to speaker—maintains eye contact appropriately	____	____	____
• Asks for clarification when message is not understood	____	____	____
• Recognizes when the listener does not understand and attempts to clarify the message	____	____	____

Metalinguistics/Phonemic Awareness

The student:	Yes	No	Sometimes
• Participates in discussions…………………………………	____	____	____
• Can identify rhyming words……………………………….	____	____	____
• Can verbally produce rhyming words……………………...	____	____	____
• Can identify initial consonant sounds in words presented orally……………………………………………………	____	____	____
• Can identify final consonant sounds in words presented orally……………………………………………………	____	____	____
• Can identify medial sounds in words presented orally……..	____	____	____
• Can blend sounds orally to form words……………………...	____	____	____
• Can segment sounds within a word orally…………………	____	____	____
• Can manipulate sounds in words by deleting, substituting, adding and shifting sounds	____	____	____

Early Identification of Language-Based Reading Disabilities

Name_____ Birth Date_____ Grade_____ Completed by_____

This checklist is designed to identify children who are at risk for language-based reading disabilities. It is intended for use with children at the end of kindergarten or beginning of first grade. Each of the descriptors listed below should be carefully considered and those that characterize the child's behavior/history should be checked. A child receiving a large number of checks should be referred for a more in-depth evaluation.

Speech Sound Awareness
- ❑ Doesn't understand and enjoy rhymes
- ❑ Doesn't easily recognize that words may begin with the same sound
- ❑ Has difficulty counting the syllables in spoken words
- ❑ Has problem clapping hands or tapping feet in rhythm with songs and/or rhymes
- ❑ Demonstrates problems learning sound-letter correspondences

Word Retrieval
- ❑ Has difficulty retrieving a specific word (e.g., calls a sheep a "goat" or says "you know a woolly animal.")
- ❑ Shows poor memory for classmates' names
- ❑ Speech is hesitant, filled with pauses or vocalizations (e.g., "um," "you know")
- ❑ Frequently uses words lacking specificity (e.g., "stuff," "thing," "what you call it")
- ❑ Has a problem remembering/retrieving verbal sequences (e.g., days of the week, alphabet)

Verbal Memory
- ❑ Has difficulty remembering instructions or directions
- ❑ Shows problems learning names of people or places
- ❑ Has difficulty remembering the words to songs or poems
- ❑ Has problems learning a second language

Speech Production/Perception
- ❑ Has problems saying common words with difficult sound patterns (e.g., animal, cinnamon, specific)
- ❑ Mishears and subsequently mispronounces words or names
- ❑ Confuses a similar sounding word with another word (e.g., saying "The *Entire* State Building is in New York")
- ❑ Combines sound patterns of similar words (e.g., saying "escavator" for escalator)
- ❑ Shows frequent slips of the tongue (e.g., saying "brue blush" for blue brush.)
- ❑ Has difficulty with tongue twisters (e.g., she sells seashells)

Comprehension
- ❑ Only responds to part of a multiple element request or instruction
- ❑ Requests multiple repetitions of instructions/directions with little improvement in comprehension
- ❑ Relies too much on context to understand what is said
- ❑ Has difficulty understanding questions
- ❑ Fails to understand age-appropriate stories
- ❑ Has difficulty making inferences, predicting outcomes, drawing conclusions
- ❑ Lacks understanding of spatial terms such as left-right, front-back

Expressive Language
- ❑ Talks in short sentences
- ❑ Makes errors in grammar (e.g., "he goed to the store" or "me want that")
- ❑ Lacks variety in vocabulary (e.g., uses "good" to mean happy, kind, polite)
- ❑ Has difficulty giving directions or explanations (e.g., may show multiple revisions or dead ends)
- ❑ Relates stories or events in a disorganized or incomplete manner
- ❑ May have much to say, but provides little specific detail
- ❑ Has difficulty with the rules of conversation, such as turn taking, staying on topic, indicating when s/he does not understand

Other Important Factors
- ❑ Has a prior history of problems in language comprehension and/or production
- ❑ Has a family history of spoken or written language problems
- ❑ Has limited exposure to literacy in the home
- ❑ Lacks interest in books and shared reading activities
- ❑ Does not engage readily in pretend play

Adjustments in the presentation of assessment for students with LDs

Students with dyslexia frequently experience difficulty in interpreting written instructions and examination papers. The wording of rubrics and questions should therefore be checked thoroughly for ambiguities. To minimize the visual stress that affects some dyslexics, examination and assignment papers should be copied onto buff or ivory paper. When composing such papers, assessors should also:

• keep dense blocks of text to a minimum

• use numbers or bullets to break up information where possible

• employ 1.5 line-spacing

• align text at the left margin only

• avoid italics, underlining and lengthy instructions in capital letters

• Clarify or simplify written directions. Some directions are written in paragraph form and contain many units of information. These can be overwhelming to some students. The teacher can help by underlining or highlighting the significant parts of the directions. Rewriting the directions is often helpful.

• For students who have difficulty with fine motor responses (such as handwriting), the response mode can be changed to underlining, selecting from multiple choices, sorting or marking. Students with fine motor problems can be given extra space for writing answers on worksheets or can be allowed to respond on individual chalkboards, tablets and so on.

• Design hierarchical worksheets. Design worksheets with problems arranged from easiest to hardest. Early success helps students begin to work.

Assessing oral presentations

1. The purpose of assessing oral presentations by dyslexic students is to avoid penalising him/her for mistakes made with grammar, spelling and punctuation or with speech production.

2. Establish the learning outcomes for the oral presentation in question. Mark the work with the intention of giving credit for the student's achievements in meeting these learning outcomes by focusing on the content and understanding of the topic. Avoid penalising the student for mistakes with the pronunciation of words, for misreading from the visual aids or for basic skills errors on visual aids or handouts.

Time issues

When extra time is granted, this will usually be 25%, which is equivalent to an extra 15 minutes for each hour.

If possible, a student with dyslexia who is receiving extra time should be placed in a room separate from main candidates to avoid the distraction of others leaving the examination room. If it is not possible, a further 10 minutes should be added to the total examination time in addition to the 25% extra time. This will help compensate for the noise and distraction caused when main candidates leave the examination room.

Marking issues

When marking a student's test, comments should always aim to be constructive and give sufficient detail for the student to make changes in the future. Academic criticism, however constructive, may be a new concept and comments should be written so that the essay rather than the writer is being criticised. Negative comments which touch upon a student's disability must not be made.

Be constructive when giving feedback noting both the positive and the negative aspects of your student's work. The focus should be to encourage the learner to progress and develop their skills so as to help them maintain self-esteem.

Food for thought!

Το μεγαλύτερο λάθος που γινόταν στη διδασκαλία κατά τους προηγούμενους αιώνες ήταν η αντιμετώπιση όλων των παιδιών ως παραλλαγών του ίδιου ατόμου. Ως αποτέλεσμα, οι εκπαιδευτικοί θεωρούσαν, ότι ήταν λογικό να διδάσκουν στους μαθητές τα ίδια θέματα με τον ίδιο τρόπο.
Howard Gardner

Μόνο οι εκπαιδευτικοί που χρησιμοποιούν ποικιλία διδακτικών μοντέλων θα επιτύχουν τη μεγιστοποίηση της επιτυχίας όλων των μαθητών ....Οι εκπαιδευτικοί πρέπει να αξιοποιούν τις δυνατότητες των μαθητών και να μετριάζουν τις μαθησιακές τους αδυναμίες. Αυτό μπορεί να γίνει μόνο με τη χρήση ποικίλων διδακτικών μεθόδων.
T. J. Lasley, T.J Matczynski

Σας ευχαριστώ θερμά για την παρουσία σας στο εκπαιδευτικό σεμινάριο.
Εάν για οποιονδήποτε λόγο επιθυμείτε να επικοινωνήσετε μαζί μου, μπορείτε μέσω
FB: Elena Xidopoulou / One Way Success
Email: elenaxid@yahoo.gr / info@onewaysuccess.gr
Κινητό: 694. 4343264