



# SCHOOL-BASED SLPS INFO SERIES

## TOPIC #3: COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT

### WHAT IS COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT?

Comprehensive assessment is used to determine whether or not a student is eligible for special education services, including speech-language services. To qualify for special education services and an IEP, the assessment results must indicate that a student has a disability and requires specially designed instruction. It is important to use a wide range of assessment measures to determine whether a student meets the three criteria for special education eligibility: having a disability, demonstrating an adverse educational impact as a result of the disability, and requiring specially designed instruction.

#### According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)...

##### Section 300.304 (b)

In conducting the evaluation, the public agency must—

1. Use a **variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child**, including information provided by the parent, that may assist in determining—
  - i. Whether the child is a child with a disability under §300.8; and
  - ii. The content of the child’s IEP, including information related to enabling the child to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum (or for a preschool child, to participate in appropriate activities);
2. **Not use any single measure or assessment** as the sole criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for the child; and
3. **Use technically sound instruments** that may assess the relative contribution of cognitive and behavioral factors, in addition to physical or developmental factors.

#### Goals of Evaluation (or Reevaluation)

- To determine if the student has a diagnosis that is adversely affecting educational performance and requiring specially designed instruction
- To establish goals for intervention for disorders that are adversely affecting academic achievement and/or functional performance
- To decide whether the student continues to be eligible for special education services

#### Utilize a Team Approach

SLPs should view themselves as part of a team that will “draw upon information from a variety of sources, including aptitude and achievement tests, parent input, and teacher recommendations, as well as information about the child’s physical condition, social or cultural background, and adaptive behavior”

(U.S. Department of Education, 2006, CFR 300.306 c i)

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What kinds of data should I gather to complete a comprehensive assessment?

In order for an assessment to be comprehensive, data must be gathered from a variety of sources. This data can include information about academic activities and results of contextualized assessments that students participate in within the school environment, as well as information from norm-referenced speech-language tests and speech-language probes, which can include interviews, observations, and a variety of informal measures. A list of examples of multiple measures is included below. SLPs should gather data, analyze it, and use it to build a complete picture of a student’s communication ability as it pertains to the educational setting.

MULTIPLE MEASURES OF ASSESSMENT - EXAMPLES			
Academic Activities	Contextualized Tests	Decontextualized Tests	Speech-Language Probes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Observations/data collection in school settings</li><li>- Artifact analysis</li><li>- Work samples</li><li>- Educational records</li><li>- Curriculum-based tests</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- State and local tests</li><li>- Norm-referenced measures of academic achievement</li><li>- Curriculum benchmarks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Norm-referenced speech-language tests for articulation, receptive language, expressive language, fluency, pragmatics, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Interviews</li><li>- Observations</li><li>- Intelligibility measures</li><li>- PVM analysis</li><li>- Language samples</li><li>- Dynamic assessment</li><li>- Case history</li></ul>

## Is a standardized test score required to establish eligibility for services in Pennsylvania?

A standardized test score is **not** required to establish eligibility for special education services within the state of Pennsylvania. However, it can provide valuable information to help determine whether the student has a disability and whether they may be eligible for services. Nonetheless, this is just part of the picture. When conducting an evaluation, the public agency must use multiple assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child, including input from the family. Eligibility determination cannot rely on a single measure or test as the sole basis for determining whether the child has a disability or for deciding on an appropriate educational program.

## Why should SLPs be cautious about relying on standardized assessment?

Not all standardized tests are created equally. The fact is that many popular tests are not particularly strong psychometrically. They also may not have been “normed” on large or diverse populations and may include inherent test bias.

## What should I look for in a standardized test?

Take a look at the testing manuals that come with your assessments. Utilize tests that are based on clearly defined and adequately sized norming populations. Also look for tests that include specific item analysis and provide statistical measures such as central tendency and dispersion. Selected tests should be **reliable** (consistent) and **valid** (measures what the test is supposed to measure), as well as “**sensitive and specific**”, accurately identifying the presence or absence of a disability. Plante and Vance (1994), recommend using assessments with both sensitivity and specificity above 80% for diagnostic use.

### Questions?

Contact the PaTTAN Speech Initiative at 800-360-7282.

