

## ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE FOR LADSE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

### General Guidelines

- Assessment is the process of gathering information to address questions. Tests are one form of assessment. Other activities to consider are reviewing records or permanent products, completing observations, and conducting interviews.
- It is always critical to know what decisions teams are trying to make before they make decisions about the assessments that will be completed. For example, certain assessment tools are better designed for screening decisions (Who has a problem?) than others and if the team is clear that they are making a decision about who has a problem, they can choose the most efficient and effective tool to address that question.
- Assessment should be focused and meaningful. The assessment process should not involve casting a wide net to see what problems we can find. As an analogy, when someone takes their car in with a concern about the brakes, the mechanic doesn't look at everything. The mechanic focuses on the parts of the car that relate to their client's concern. In the same way, tests should not be given simply to satisfy someone's curiosity. By the time a student has reached the level where a team is considering an individual evaluation, the team should know enough about the student to be able to identify specific assessment questions.
- Always begin with the least intrusive methods to address a question. If screening rules out a problem, the team should not move to further testing.

### Questions to Ask When a Student is Not Making Adequate Progress in a Tier 3 Intervention

#### Before Individual Problem-Solving

- 1) Are we using an evidence-based program that is comprehensive or specifically targeting the student's needs or are we using a collection of strategies that lack empirical evidence of effectiveness?
  - a. If not using an evidence-based program, consider an evidence-based program that is comprehensive or specifically targets the student's identified deficits.
  - b. If you are using an evidence-based program, continue on to the next question.
- 2) Is the program being implemented with fidelity?
  - a. If there is no evidence, collect data on fidelity of implementation.
  - b. If program is not being implemented with fidelity, make adjustments and continue to monitor progress.
  - c. If there is adequate information that the program is being implemented with fidelity then continue on to the next question.
- 3) Are other students in the group (if student is instructed in a group) benefitting from the program?
  - a. If not, begin problem-solving for the group. Identify and test hypotheses for why students in the group are not making progress. Make adjustments to the intervention based on information gathered in problem solving.

- b. If other students are benefitting from the program, move on to individual problem-solving for the target student.

### Individual Problem-Solving

#### 1) Problem Identification

- a. Using local norms, national norms, aggregate norms, criterion-referenced benchmark scores, and/or state/district/classroom expectations, calculate the discrepancy between what is expected and what is occurring. The team should have collected this information well before individual problem solving; however, it may be important to update information as part of the individual problem solving process.
- b. Each district should have criteria for determining when to proceed with individual problem solving. If the student meets that criteria, proceed to problem analysis. If the student does not meet that criteria, return to address questions before individual problem solving.

#### 2) Problem Analysis

- a. Analyze the student's performance in the intervention program and identify hypotheses for why the student is not making progress. Some ideas for areas to examine- **RIOT**- Review, Interview, Observe, and Test in the domains of **ICEL**- Instruction, Curriculum, Environment, and Learner.

##### **RIOT:**

- i. Review- permanent products, progress monitoring data, test performance from the curriculum-based assessments
- ii. Interview- the person delivering the intervention, the student, the parents
- iii. Observe the student and teacher during the intervention session
- iv. Test- re-administer tests from the curriculum

##### **ICEL**

- v. Instruction- how the curriculum is taught including variables such as the clarity of expectations and directions, progress monitoring and decision-making, pacing, and opportunities to respond
- vi. Curriculum-what is taught including variables such as the stated outcomes of the lessons and content of the lessons
- vii. Environment-where the instruction takes place including variables such as physical arrangement, rules, management plans, routines, and expectations
- viii. Learner-who is being taught. This is the last domain to consider and includes variables such as student's background knowledge, skills, and motivation.
- b. Decide on the most plausible hypotheses and test hypotheses for why the student is not making adequate progress. When testing hypotheses related to the learner, begin with the materials and assessments in the curriculum that is being taught and move on to other assessments only when needed to address specific hypotheses about the student.

#### 3) Intervention Planning & Implementation

- a. Make adjustments to the instruction, curriculum, and/or environment based on the information gathered by testing the hypotheses.
- b. Collect treatment fidelity data and provide support to implementer(s) as needed.

#### 4) Plan Evaluation

Continue to monitor progress at least once/week, examining data regularly to determine whether the student's progress is improving.

### **Assessment of Academic Achievement for Determining Special Education Eligibility**

See guidelines in the previous section to address questions before an evaluation for special education eligibility.

Select tests based on specific questions about the student's performance in an academic area. When the district has a local assessment with adequate technical properties, such as Curriculum-Based Measurement (e.g., AIMSweb, DIBELS), then a nationally-normed achievement test is not necessary.

When curriculum-based measures are used, make sure that multiple probes are administered on multiple days. In addition, the team will consider other data, such as observations of classroom performance, assessments from the curriculum, or scores on group-administered tests, to determine the student's performance discrepancy, rate of progress, and instructional needs.

When the district does not have a local assessment with adequate technical properties, select a published, nationally-norm referenced test with adequate technical properties to address the specific assessment questions. In addition, it is expected that someone on the team administer a survey-level assessment using curriculum-based measures to determine the appropriate instructional level and compare the student's performance on curriculum-based measures by using an aggregate norm, criterion-referenced standard, and/or a small local norm sample of students who are performing in the middle range of what is expected.

### **Assessment of Intellectual Functioning**

Before administering a complete intelligence test as an assessment of intellectual functioning, consider ruling out a cognitive disability with any of the following:

- Meeting state benchmarks in any area on the ISAT
- Passing grades (or the equivalent of passing grades) in at least one area where the student is not provided with significant modifications
- Average achievement in at least one area
- No concerns about adaptive behavior

If you are unable to rule out a cognitive disability with any of the above measures, begin with a screening by using the short form of an individually-administered test of intellectual functioning.

If you are unable to rule out a cognitive disability using the short-form intelligence test, administer the complete test of intellectual functioning.

## **Requests for Tests to Fulfill Requirements for Postsecondary Services and Supports**

Decisions about testing to fulfill requirements for postsecondary services and supports are local education decisions; however, it is LADSE's position that school psychologists assigned to support students in Grades 9-12 should not spend their time doing testing that is not relevant to eligibility for special education and instructional planning for students during their high school years. Guidance from the US Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights explicitly states: "Neither your high school nor your postsecondary school is required to conduct or pay for a new evaluation to document your disability and need for an academic adjustment. This may mean that you have to pay or find funding to pay an appropriate professional for an evaluation. If you are eligible for services through your state vocational rehabilitation agency, you may qualify for an evaluation at no cost to you. You may locate your state vocational rehabilitation agency through the following Web page: <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES/VOCREHAB.HTM>." LADSE leaders have worked with district special education leaders to create a letter for parents and students explaining our position on testing to fulfill requirements for postsecondary services and supports. (see attached guidance from US Department of Education and letter created by LADSE and district leaders)