RIVIER UNIVERSITY

**DIVISION OF EDUCATION**

# **SPECIALIST IN THE ASSESSMENT OF INTELLECTUAL FUNCTIONING PROGRAM**

AND

**ASSOCIATION OF SPECIALISTS IN ASSESSMENT OF**

**INTELLECTUAL FUNCTIONING (ASAIF)**

[**http://www.asaif.net**](http://www.asaif.net)

**Comments on Reports 10/15/14 # 252**

The **Association of Specialists in Assessment of Intellectual Functioning (ASAIF)** sponsors educational activities supporting the assessment of intellectual functioning, including this newsletter, co-sponsored by the Specialist in Assessment of Intellectual Functioning program at Rivier University,[[1]](#footnote-1) evening dinner-and-training events called "Shorties," and workshops. **ASAIF is now authorized by NASP to provide CPD credits.** We also provide clock and sun dial hours.

**If you have topics on which you would like ASAIF to do a workshop or Shorty, please tell me at** johnzerowillis@yahoo.com**. We have worked with school districts to co-sponsor workshops in the districts. We are happy to travel outside New Hampshire if someone wants to pay the speaker's travel expenses. We have traditionally offered Shorties on Friday evenings. If there is any chance that you might attend a Shorty some time, please let me know what evening(s) you prefer and what topics would capture your interest.**

If you are reading a bootleg version of **this newsletter** and wish to receive your own free copies of this newsletter, email me at johnzerowillis@yahoo.com. Back issues of this newsletter are archived at <http://www.asaif.net> under "Reports." The ASAIF Website <http://www.asaif.net> also includes opinion columns, such as "Have a WRAT for Lunch."

**CONTENT**

**New Composites!**

The **WISC-V** (more at Jill Hartmann and my ASAIF workshop Friday 12 December) now offers the following composite scores.

**VERBAL COMPREHENSION VISUAL SPATIAL**

**FLUID REASONING WORKING MEMORY**

**PROCESSING SPEED QUANTITATIVE REASONING**

**AUDITORY WORKING MEMORY NONVERBAL**

**GENERAL ABILITY COGNITIVE PROFICIENCY**

**NAMING SPEED SYMBOL TRANSLATION**

**STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL FULL SCALE**

The **KTEA-3** (more at Melissa Farrall and my ASAIF workshop next Friday 24 October) now offers the following composite scores.

**READING**

* Letter & Word Recognition
* Reading Comprehension

**Decoding**

* Letter & Word Recognition
* Nonsense Word Decoding

**READING FLUENCY**

* Word Recognition Fluency
* Decoding Fluency
* Silent Reading Fluency

**READING UNDERSTANDING**

* Reading Comprehension
* Reading Vocabulary

**MATH**

* Math Concepts & Applications
* Math Computation

**WRITTEN LANGUAGE**

* Written Expression
* Spelling

**SOUND-SYMBOL**

* Phonological Processing
* Nonsense Word Decoding

**COMPREHENSION**

* Reading Comprehension
* Listening Comprehension

**EXPRESSION**

* Written Expression
* Oral Expression

**ORTHOGRAPHIC PROCESSING**

* Word Recognition Fluency
* Spelling
* Letter Naming Facility

**ACADEMIC FLUENCY**

* Decoding Fluency
* Math Fluency
* Writing Fluency

**ORAL LANGUAGE**

* Oral Expression
* Listening Comprehension
* Associational Fluency

**ORAL FLUENCY**

* Associational Fluency
* Object Naming Facility

**ACADEMIC SKILLS BATTERY (ASB)**

* Letter & Word Recognition
* Reading Comprehension
* Math Concepts & Applications
* Math Computation
* Written Expression
* Spelling

**Scoring Errors.** I recently made minor contributions to an article being submitted for publication: "Wechsler Administration and Scoring Errors Made by Graduate Students and School Psychologists" by Erika Rodger and Ron Dumont (<http://www.myschoolpsychology.com/testing-information/#errors-on-cognitive-assessments-administered-by-graduate-studentsand-practicing-school-psychologists>). Dr. Rodger had the opportunity, working as a teaching assistant in graduate assessment courses over several years, to review a whole raft of WISCs and WAISs inflicted on unsuspecting victims by master's and doctoral candidates, and she somehow managed to collect a bunch of Wechsler scales administered in real life by practicing psychologists. Her detailed, carefully analyzed, and thoughtfully and clearly discussed findings are not cause for optimism. It is for us, the evaluators, to be dedicated to the unfinished work of administering and scoring tests accurately. It is for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us of reading directions and items exactly as written in the manual, of recording all responses verbatim, of using the manual to score items correctly, of recording elapsed times and adhering to time limits, of awarding bonus points correctly, of performing simple arithmetic accurately, of looking up and recording scores accurately, using straightedges as needed, of verifying that we entered raw scores correctly in computerized scoring programs, and of copying scores correctly into our reports. It is for us, the evaluators, to take increased devotion to the cause of accurate testing and reporting so that our examinees shall not have been tested in vain. My take on some of Dr. Rodgers's data was that experienced examiners sometimes seem to think that their personal judgment is more valid that the normative procedures

The article is based on Dr. Rodger's dissertation under Dr. Ron Dumont at Fairleigh Dickinson University documenting the kinds of errors by both experienced school psychologists and graduate students.  In her Introduction to the dissertation, Dr. Rodger writes,

Cognitive assessments are prevalent in U.S. history and policy, and are still very widely used fora variety of purposes. Individuals are trained on the administration and interpretation of theseassessments, and upon completion of a program it should be assumed that they are able tocomplete an assessment without making administrative, scoring, or recording errors. However, an examination of assessment protocols completed by students as well as practicing schoolpsychologists reveals that errors are the norm, not the exception. The purpose of this study wasto examine errors committed by both master’s and doctoral-level students on three series ofcognitive assessments as well as errors made by practicing school psychologists.

To read her dissertation, click on: [Erika Rodger Test Errors](http://www.myschoolpsychology.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Erika-Rodger-Test-Errors.pdf) (<http://www.myschoolpsychology.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Erika-Rodger-Test-Errors.pdf>)

Erika's findings are really depressing. We must do better. Please see, for example:

Alfonso, V., Johnson, A., Patinella, L., & Rader, D. (1998). Common WISC-III examiner errors: Evidence from graduate students in training. *Psychology in the Schools*, *35*, 119-125.

Belk, M., LoBello, S., Ray, G., & Zachar, P. (2002). WISC-III administration, clerical, and scoring errors made by student examiners. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, *20*, 290-300.

Brazelton, E., Jackson, R., Buckhalt, J., Shapiro, S., & Byrd, D. (2003). Scoring errors on the WISC-III: A study across levels of education, degree fields, and current professional positions. *Professional Educator*, *25*(2), 1-8.

Conner, R., & Woodall, R. E. (1983). The effects of experience and structured feedback on WISC-R error rates made by student examiners. *Psychology in the Schools, 20,* 376-379.

Egan, P., McCabe, P., Semenchuk, D., & Butler, J. (2003). Using portfolios to teach test scoring skills: A preliminary investigation. *Teaching of Psychology, 30*(3), 233-235.

Erdodi, L., Richard, D., & Hopwood, C. (2009). The importance of relying on the manual: Scoring error variance in the WISC-IV vocabulary subtest. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, *27*, 374-385.

Lee, D., Reynolds, C. R., & Willson, V. L. (2003). Standardized test administration: Why bother? *Journal of Forensic Neuropsychology, 3,* 55-81. doi:10.1300/J151v03n03\_04

Loe, S., Kadlubek, R., & Marks, W. (2007). Administration and scoring errors on the WISC-IV among graduate student examiners. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, *25*, 237-247.

Patterson, M., Slate, J., Jones, C., & Steger, H. (1995). The effects of practice administrations in learning to administer and score the WAIS-R: A partial replication. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *55*, 32-37.

Sherrets, S., Gard, G., & Langner, H. (1979). Frequency of clerical errors on WISC protocols. *Psychology in the Schools, 16*(4), 495-496.

Slate, J. R., & Chick, D. (1989). WISC-R examiner errors: Cause for concern. *Psychology in the Schools, 26*, 74-84.

Slate, J. R., & Jones, C. H. (1990). Student error in administering the WISC-R: Identifying problem areas. *Measurement & Evaluation in Counseling & Development*, *23*, 137-140.

Slate, J. R., & Jones, C. H. (1993). Evidence that practitioners err in administering and scoring the WAIS-R. *Measurement & Evaluation in Counseling & Development, 20*(4), 156-162.

Slate, J. R., Jones, C. H., Coulter, C., & Covert, T. L. (1992). Practitioners’ administration and scoring of the WISC-R: Evidence that we do err. *Journal of School Psychology, 30*, 77-82.

Slate, J. R., Jones, C. H., Murray, R. A., & Coulter, C. (1993). Evidence that practitioners err in administering and scoring the WAIS-R. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 25*, 156-161.

Warren, S. A., & Brown, W. G. (1972). Examiner scoring errors on individual intelligence tests. *Psychology in the Schools, 9*, 118-122.

Willis, J. O. (2000). Scoring errors necessitate double-checking protocols. *Today's School Psychologist*, *4*(5), 7. (Don't bother tracking down this one: good rant but no new data.)

1. RTFM! (Read the Fact-Filled Manual). Annotate and highlight it. If it is a shared manual, do so carefully, but still do it. Other evaluators will benefit. Consider purchasing a personal copy of the manual for a test of which you have joint custody. Use the manual, including appendices, to score the test every time.

2. Count scores three different ways.

 a. Count the number of points (and add items below basal if you are supposed to).

 b. Count the number of lost points and subtract from the total possible points.

 c. Start counting with the raw score and orally add on the lost points.

3. If using a computer-scoring program, triple-check raw score entries.

4. Copy scores carefully from subtest page to score page and from score page to report. Triple check.

5. The Regional Services and Education Center (RSEC) Psychoeducational Services staff used to try to catch each other's errors. Joel Austin once looked over my shoulder and commented, just loudly enough for all my other staff to hear, "Dr. Willis, would the brilliance of your diagnostic coup be in any small way enhanced by scoring the test correctly?" Brutal, but effective. Dr. Bill Lothrop spotted a clerical error on one of my WISC-R record forms. I have remembered that incident every time I have scored a WISC-R, WISC-III, and WISC-IV, and the memory will continue to haunt me with the WISC-V.

6. Let experienced colleagues observe you testing from time to time or let them review videotapes of your testing. Fredye Sherr once caught me omitting a key word from a test item. ("Examiner drift" occurs when a very experienced examiner makes and then perpetuates a deviation from standardized administration or scoring rules and never realizes it.)

7. When scoring difficult responses, look at the examples in the manual. Focus on the worst higher-scoring responses and the best lower-scoring ones and ask yourself, "Self, what is the difference between these two similar, but differently scored examples?" If you can figure out what the test-development team was thinking when they included those examples, you will better understand the scoring rules.

8. Unless you have a test on which only the examples provided in manual can receive credit, use a good dictionary and Google. If, for example, you were to ask an examinee to define "neighbor," you might get the response, "Luke 10:25-37." Obviously, you should query, but it you failed to do so, I think you should give credit.

9. When trying to establish a basal, tentatively assume questionable response are wrong. When trying to establish a ceiling, tentatively assume questionable responses are correct. It beats telephoning the child at home the night before the meeting and asking, "Do you remember when we were working together last week and I asked you to tell me what some words meant? I need to ask you to tell me the meanings of a few more words." Pattern Construction and Picture Naming are really difficult to do over the telephone.

10. Watch out for tricky rules, such as finishing all the items on any page if the items are shown on the examinee's side of the easel on the WJ III and WJ IV, even if passing the last item invalidates what had been a perfectly good ceiling and requires you to go on to another page. Also, the WJ III and IV allow you to use clinical judgment to administer, score, and count items below a valid basal and above a valid ceiling if that good clinical judgment leads you to believe that the examinee might fail an easy item or pass a difficult one (requiring you to go on and establish a new, lower basal or new, higher ceiling). Similarly, people forget that there is a "Wechsler giveth" rule that, if you start below the age-appropriate starting point, the examinee makes some errors, and then the examinee establishes a basal when she or he finally gets up to the age-appropriate starting point, you give full credit to all items below that basal at the age-appropriate starting point. (The errors were made on items you really should not have administered.) However, if less-than-perfect scores on the first two items at the age-appropriate starting point require you to administer lower-numbered items and the examinee establishes a ceiling below some correct responses on the way to finally obtaining a basal, the "Wechsler taketh away" rule says we cannot give credit for items above that ceiling. Again, on most DAS-II subtests, item sets are complete if we have three correct and three incorrect responses – **not** three consecutive ones. Rotations of more than 30 degrees are penalized on the WISC-IV Block Design, but not on the DAS-II Pattern Construction. RTFM.

**STYLE**

Don’t write merely to be understood. Write so that you cannot possibly be misunderstood.

 – Robert Louis Stevenson

They say that an infinite number of monkeys

typing on an infinite number of typewriters will – *In the Blink of an Eye*, The Inspector Lynley

eventually produce *Hamlet*.  This is an example Mysteries, Series VI, based on novels by

of what you get with fewer monkeys and less time.   Elizabeth George, screenwriter Ed Whitmore

September 24 was **National Punctuation Day** <http://www.nationalpunctuationday.com/>

**Commas matter!**  *The special education director said the superintendent is nuts.*

 *The special education director, said the superintendent, is nuts.*

**Beginning a report with the conclusions**, an idea first suggested to me, I believe, by Frank Dialessi, is becoming ever more attractive to me. Frank used to joke (at least I think he was joking) that it was simply fun to watch everyone at the meeting shuffle frantically to the back of the report for the conclusions and then work their way back to the front in search of those conclusions.

In many ways, that approach is similar to putting an abstract at the beginning of a journal article, and it serves many of the same purposes. I think it also improves the chances of someone actually reading the conclusions.

There are some tricky aspects to this approach. For example, it is difficult to avoid, as trial attorneys say, "assuming facts not in evidence" and technical terms that are defined later in the report. Conclusions at the beginning of the report may require more explanation than they would if placed at the end.

I just realized this minute that, like the college student dating two classmates, I can have my Kate and Edith, too. I can put an abstract (including key recommendations) at the beginning and traditional conclusions and recommendations at the end (before the appendix that contains all of the obtained scores and statistical discussions, much of which I did not allow to clutter up my text). Old dogs can learn new tricks. (Not very new: I have been writing technical papers that way for years.)

An abstract would also allow me to edit it down to a Flesh-Kincaid readability level suitable for the weakest reader receiving a copy and, if necessary, to use wider margins and 1.5-line spacing. (It is always prudent to run a readability check [however flawed those statistics may be] on our reports. In Microsoft Word, click FILE, then Options, then Proofing, and check Show readability statistics. The click OK and your final spelling and grammar check will end with data including words per sentence and a Flesch-Kincaid grade level. For example, this section of this issue has a Flesch-Kincaid readability grade level of 11.6, easy enough for all of you, but pretty steep for an evaluation report.

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This newsletter goes out intermittently to about 400 people on eleven separate lists (because some mailboxes won't accept mailings to more than 49 recipients). If you wish to contact the entire list, not just your 1/11 of it, please send the message to me, and I will add it (subject to Comstock, Hays, Children's Internet Protection Act, HIPAA, FERPA, copyright, and Homeland Security considerations) to the next mailing. If you wish to be protected from receiving future copies, just email me at johnzerowillis@yahoo.com.

1. Neither ASAIF nor Rivier University is in any way, shape, or form responsible for the quirky personal, individual opinions in this newsletter. They cannot be blamed for what is written here. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)