



Translating Test Jargon

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Meeting Date 1/7/04		

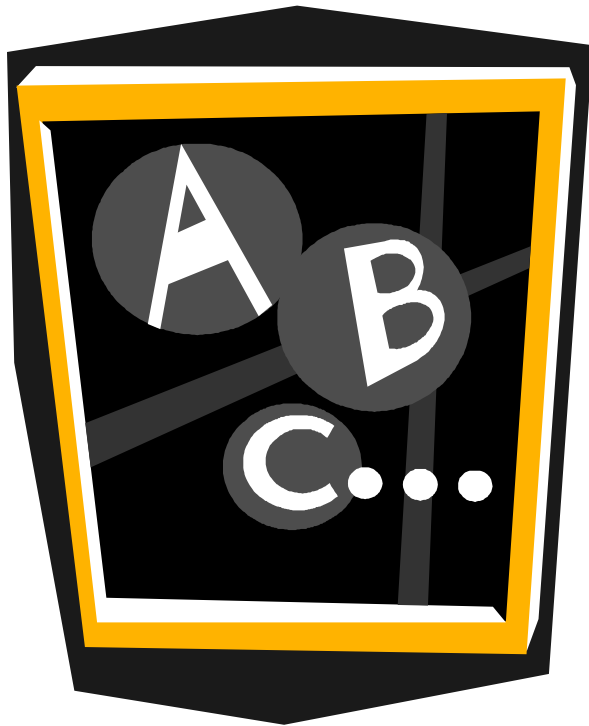
What Are We Going To Accomplish In The Next Ten Minutes

- Translate Test Jargon Into English
- Define The Uses Of Various Tests
- Making The Linkage Between Test Scores and Decision Making
- Identify Some Realities About Testing



Translate Test Jargon Into English

The Acronym Game



- **Two Major Categories**
 - **Norm Referenced Tests**
 - **Criterion Referenced Tests**
- **Hybrids**
 - **Norm Referenced and Criterion Referenced Combinations**
 - **National Assessment of Educational Progress**



Norm Referenced Tests

- **Plain English Definition:**

- *Tests that rank each student with respect to the achievement of others in broad areas of knowledge.*

- **Where Do The Tests Come From?**

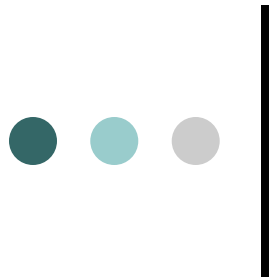
- *Sophisticated development process in which experts develop and field test items that are reflective of generally agreed upon curriculum content.*



Norm Referenced Tests

○ Characteristics of NRT's

- Usually fewer than 4 items testing each skill
- Items vary in difficulty
- Tests are constructed to discriminate between high and low achievers
- Pencil and paper tests are generally timed
- Accommodations are made for documented disabled students
- Scores are commonly reported as percentiles



Criterion Referenced Tests

- **Plain English Definition:**

- *Tests that determine whether each student has achieved specific skills or concepts.*

- **Where Do The Tests Come From?**

- *Sophisticated development process in which experts (generally teachers and curriculum specialists) select and field test items that are reflective of the curriculum content and standards of a specific school district or state.*



Criterion Referenced Tests

○ Characteristics of CRT's

- Each skill is usually tested by at least four items in order to obtain an adequate sample of student performance and to minimize the effect of guessing**
- Tests are generally designed to assess mastery of specific skills at a particular grade level**
- Often tests are timed pencil and paper tests but may also include writing samples, practical skill demonstrations**
- Accommodations are made for documented disabled students**
- Scores are commonly reported as percentages and more recently categorized as basic, proficient, advanced**



Strengths

○ Norm Referenced

- Compares student performance against similar groups across the nation
- Proven track record of reliability and dependable rank order of achievers from highest to lowest
- Broad coverage of academic standards
- Easy to administer

○ Criterion Referenced

- Compares student performance against the specific curriculum standards
- Convenient for pre-post assessments – inform instruction
- Identifies specific strengths and weaknesses of students as related to a specific curriculum
- Easy to administer



Weaknesses

○ Norm Referenced

- National standards v. local standards
- Information has limited use to a classroom teacher
- Relies on national norms and (often) scoring that has been flawed
- Expensive and time consuming
- Opportunity to learn may not exist

○ Criterion Referenced

- Assumes local standards are what children need to know - competition
- Mastery score (cut scores) are potentially inexact
- Writing samples and practical demonstrations are often expensive and questionable reliability
- Teachers may teach to the test



Making The Linkage Between Test Scores and Decision Making

○ Norm Referenced

- **Helps school leaders and policy makers compare local performance against a national norm**
- **Serves as a broad measure of competitiveness**

○ Criterion Referenced

- **Help teachers and principals to design school improvement**
- **Help policy makers know how students are doing as measured by local and state standards**
- **Help policy makers deploy resources effectively**



Some Realities About Testing

- **There is room for both tests in the education improvement process**
- **Both tests can help you with your policy role if you understand their strengths and weaknesses**
- **Assisting parents to understand test results and their implications is a yet unrealized objective**
- **If all else fails, ask a teacher how the kids are doing!**