



Assessing Children with Disabilities

ASHA believes that important conceptual, practical, and ethical issues must be considered by those who design and implement assessments, including testing programs. ASHA supports the use of assessments that measure progress and achievement in multiple ways. The focus on a single interpretation of a single test score can be harmful as it tends to narrow instructional objectives and can result in insufficient amounts of teaching for all children.

ASHA favors the use of diagnostic assessments to guide teachers and school-based speech-language pathologists and audiologists in the improvement of learning outcomes. High-quality classroom assessments encompass a variety of ways to demonstrate knowledge that fit with how children really learn. Assessments should be used to support rich academic instruction and provide information that improves student learning. Children have a right to assessment that identifies their strengths as well as their needs.

Multiple assessments should be used when crucial decisions with long-term consequences are being made.

ASHA Recommendations for Assessment in NCLB Reform:

1. Design assessment plans at the state and local levels that reflect the complexity of human communication and learning.
2. Construct rigorous classroom assessments at the state and local levels that will demonstrate the effectiveness of instructional techniques. Base instructional decisions on multiple assessments and multiple interpretations of the same assessments (such as providing average level of attainment, amount of growth, proportions of students in the various quartiles or quintiles, and proportions of students who are meeting state standards).
3. Develop assessments with input from all of the school-based professionals who enable students to access the general curriculum
4. Build assessments at the state and local levels around daily educational tasks that teachers and other educators use to collect data specific to the content and strategies they are teaching.
5. Provide multiple, up-to-date measures of student performance at the state and local level.
6. Include measures of student performance that assess higher order thinking skills and understanding.
7. Educate parents, community members, and policymakers about classroom-based assessment as a means of improving learning outcomes.

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