

UNDERSTANDING FORMAL AND INFORMAL ASSESSMENTS

(submitted by Melissa Sansobrinno, C/OGA)

Parents of children with dyslexia and other learning differences are presented with a lot of data by tutors and school districts. These data are important for identifying areas of difficulty for the student, for planning support and tutoring strategies, but they can be overwhelming for parents to understand.

Assessments can be divided into two broad categories: Formal and Informal assessments. Informal tests are usually used to assess academic skills and are often used by OG tutors to plan lessons, design instruction, and progress monitor. Informal assessments are usually easy to understand, and their scores are reported in basic terms such as percentages or grade-level equivalents. As OG tutors, some examples of informal assessments are the Phonemic Awareness Skills Test (PAST), the Gallistel-Ellis Test of Coding Skills (GE Test), and the Words Their Way Spelling Inventory.

Formal assessments, on the other hand, are standardized, norm-referenced tests that have highly specified ways of administering and scoring them. The term "norm-referenced" means that scores are measured and compared against a normal distribution curve, also known as a "bell curve" (Figure 1). In formal assessments results are reported as scaled scores (usually

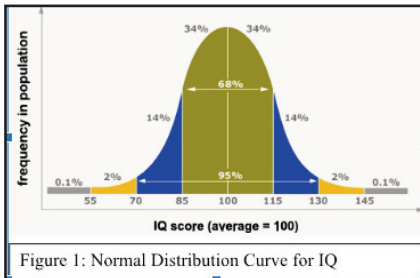


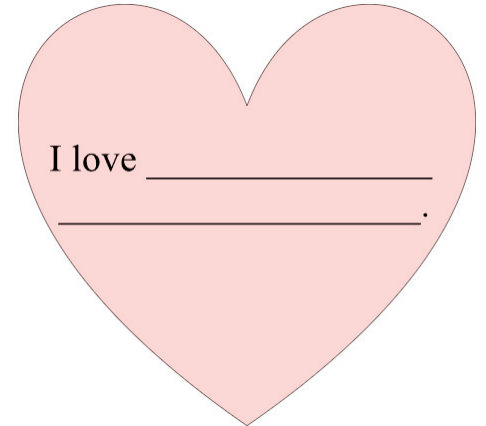
Figure 1: Normal Distribution Curve for IQ

used on subtests), standard scores (used for composite and index scores that group two or more subtests), and percentile ranks. When looking at these scores, it is important to keep in mind the standard deviation, which tells you whether differences in scores are significantly different. Let's take for example scores on a common cognitive assessment known as the Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children, 5th edition (WISC-V). In this test, a standard score of 100 is the mean (average), and the standard deviation is 15. This means that scores that are more than 15 points apart are significantly different from each other. For example, if a student receives a score of 118 in the Verbal Comprehension domain and a score of 89 in the Processing Speed domain of the WISC-V, the difference in those scores is 29 points (nearly two standard deviations!), which is significantly different. This data indicates that this student has a relative weakness in processing speed and may require extra time to complete academic tasks.

Another score to keep in mind when looking at standardized testing data is the percentile

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February Writing Fun



1. Take a heart.
2. Complete the sentence: I love.....
3. Hang your heart on the window in the tutoring center.
4. Watch our heart of things we love grow all month.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



OG Cohort training on February 1.

No EVENING tutoring February 18 - 21.

The office will be closed on Monday, February 17 & Saturday, February 22.

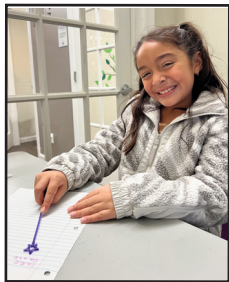
February 17, 2025

★ ★ ★ **HAPPY** ★ ★ ★
PRESIDENTS
 ★ DAY ★

The office will be closed on this day and also Saturday, February 22nd.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: OLIVIA

(submitted by Andrea, OG Trainee)



Olivia is a fun, sweet, creative 8 year old, who excels in the arts. She is always enthusiastic to learn new things and works extremely hard, which has led to the amazing progress that she has made with the Orton-Gillingham approach. Olivia is a competitive dancer who creates new dance moves to help her remember non-phonetic words. She enjoys acting out the stories that she reads. In her free

time, Olivia can be found having fun at Sky Zone and especially enjoys going to Sephora and the mall.

Here are a few more fun facts about Olivia:

What is your favorite movie? Wicked

What is your favorite food?

A spicy chicken sandwich, large fries, and a lemonade from Wendy's.

What is your favorite book? The *Baby-Sitters Club* series.

What is your favorite holiday? Christmas

What is your favorite subject? Math, reading, and writing

What is your favorite color? Baby blue

What do you want to be when you grow up?

A singer and actress.

What are your goals? To improve with math and reading.

What is your favorite activity during OG sessions?

The Phonological Awareness drill.

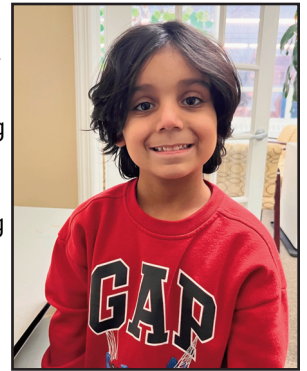
We are looking forward to seeing all of the amazing things that Olivia will accomplish in the future.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: OLIVER

(submitted by Gina, OG Trainee)

Oliver is a very hardworking first grade student. He comes to Literacy Nassau three times a week, always ready to do his best. Oliver is making progress everyday! Oliver loves playing video games with his two older brothers and he enjoys reading books about superheroes.

Here are some fun facts about Oliver:



Who is your favorite superhero?

Spiderman and Ironman

What is your favorite video game to play?

Fortnite

What sports do you like to play?

Baseball

What is your favorite subject in school?

Playing games on my iPad.

What is your favorite food?

I love eating McDonald's!

What do you like about coming to Literacy Nassau?

I loved spinning the wheel and winning a prize.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

A YouTuber.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL ASSESSMENTS (CONT'D)

rank. Unlike percentage, which tells you the proportion of questions correctly answered, percentile rank is a measure of where the score falls when compared to the population. For example, if the percentile rank on a test or subtest is 83% (83rd percentile), this means your child scored better than 83% of the population. Raw scores are rarely reported on standardized/norm-referenced tests; scores are always viewed in relation to the normal curve and the population.

When it comes to interpreting testing data, the devil is in the details! But with a few tricks and a little statistical analysis, what used to be a confusing array of numbers can easily make sense and help your CSE team pinpoint the right support for your child.



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PRACTICIONER**




Orton-Gillingham is a powerful approach to teaching reading and spelling that engages multiple pathways in the brain to help students learn with success. It is widely considered the gold standard of instruction for students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities.

We are currently accepting applications for our OG training program. The live initial 35-hour training will be held from 8/18 - 8/22. The 100-hour practicum runs through the school year and there are five (5) additional training dates. All sessions are held in-person at our office in Wantagh.

**Space in this cohort is limited and competitive.
To learn more go to:
www.literacynassau.org/liveogtraining**

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