

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Standardized tests are not made by teachers. They are carefully designed by test experts. Before they are used for general testing purposes in schools, large numbers of students representative of the entire country are tested. The test experts then determine how each individual student's score compares to the scores of all other students who took the test. Special types of scores are then used to show how any student who would ever take the test would compare to other students taking the test at any time anywhere in the country.

Students do not pass or fail a standardized test, and it is extremely rare for a student to get 100% or answer all questions correctly. Standardized tests contain questions that range from quite simple to very difficult so that each student will have a chance to perform up to his/her level of accomplishment. The average range of scores are the scores which most students normally receive. When it is appropriate, the average score or average range of scores is shown in the explanation of score types listed below.

It is extremely important to remember that the purpose of standardized testing is to provide information about a student's learning or ability to learn. By comparing the student's score with the scores of other students of the same grade or age, decisions can be made about the kind of instructional program that should be planned for the student.

TYPES OF STANDARDIZED SCORES

PERCENTILE - Percentile scores are 1 through 99. More than half of all students score 23 through 76 which are considered to be average scores. A score of 45 means that the student scored better than 45 out of every 100 students taking the test. Though 50% on a classroom test is failing, the 50th percentile on a standardized test is the average score.

NATIONAL PERCENTILE - National percentiles show where a student ranks in every 100 students in the nation.

LOCAL PERCENTILE - Local percentiles show where a student ranks in every 100 students in his locality, (school or school district).

STANINE - Students are placed in groups called stanines 14. The students are not evenly divided among the stanines. For example, only 4 in every 100 students score high enough to be placed in stanine 9. More than half of all students are in stanines 4, 5 or 6 which are considered to be average scores. Stanines are useful for comparing a student to groups of students.

GRADE EQUIVALENT - Grade equivalent scores usually range from 1.1 -12.9. The number before the decimal point is the grade in the school and after the decimal point, it is the number of months the child has been in the grade. The letters PK and K are used as grades for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten which those children are tested. A student is expected to score a grade equivalent that is the same as the grade and month that he/she is in school. Scores close to the student's grade and month in school are considered average scores. Scores that are years above or below the expected score do not mean the student should necessarily be placed in a different grade. These scores simply mean that a student is achieving below or above the average for his/her grade.

AGE EQUIVALENT - Age equivalents are similar to the grade equivalents except that they compare a student's performance in terms of age rather than his/her grade in school. For example, the score 12.3, means 12 years and 3 months. The student may be of any age, but in this example, he/she did as well on the test as most students who were 12 years and 3 months old when they took the test.

IQ/SCHOOL ABILITY INDEX (SAI)/COGNITIVE SKILLS INDEX (CSI) - These scores give an indication of the student's ability to learn. The average score is 100, but students who score 85 to 115 are considered in the normal range of ability.

RAW SCORES - Raw scores are simply the number of questions answered correctly. They have little meaning until compared to other scores.

SCALES SCORES - Scaled scores are not meaningful unless they are compared to other scaled scores that a student received on previous tests. School district personnel use scaled scores to determine a student's progress from year to year.

DRP - This score measures a student's ability to read and understand prose materials. DRP units range from a low of 15 thru a high of 99. DRP units are usually reported at the Independent and Instructional levels, and also at the Frustration level. The Independent DRP means the student should understand ninety percent of the meaning of all prose at the reported DRP units. The Instructional DRP means that the student should understand seventy-five percent of the meaning of all prose at the reported DRP units.