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ABSTRACT

During spring 1988, an initial survey was conducted among two- and four-year colleges in New York State to identify the primary reading test used for diagnosis and placement. In order to address several questions raised by the study, a follow-up survey of participating two-year colleges was conducted during fall 1989. Of the 28 two-year colleges involved in the initial survey, 20 schools returned the follow-up questionnaires. The purpose of the second survey was to pinpoint the exact reasons for test use, to evaluate instructor satisfaction with the measurement tool, and to identify any trends in the adoption of new measurement tools. The second survey instrument was individualized, identifying each institution's original responses (e.g., cut-off scores, follow-up testing, and reading course components). Findings of the follow-up survey included the following: (1) educators felt that current standardized tests were not meeting the needs of the individual colleges to assess the abilities of the diverse student populations which are served; (2) there was a general move toward the use of more comprehensive, multiple assessment tests; (3) in-house tests for follow-up assessment remained the most commonly used tool; and (4) reading educators agreed that their major concerns were insufficient time and the lack of administrative and faculty support to deal with students experiencing reading deficiencies. The survey instrument, sample responses, and the names of the specific tests most commonly used are included. (GFW)

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A SURVEY OF COLLEGE READING PROGRAMS IN NEW YORK STATE:  
DIAGNOSIS, PLACEMENT AND PROGRAM COMPONENTS -  
PART II

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A SURVEY OF COLLEGE READING PROGRAMS IN NEW YORK STATE:

**DIAGNOSIS, PLACEMENT AND PROGRAM COMPONENTS -**

PART II

During the Spring of 1988, a survey was conducted among the two and four year colleges in New York State with the expressed purpose of identifying the primary reading test used for diagnosis and placement at these colleges. The results of this survey were published in "A Survey of College Reading Programs in New York State: Diagnosis, Placement and Program Components" (ED 298 989, Sept. 1988). The findings of the survey raised several serious issues and a follow-up survey of the two year colleges only was conducted during the Fall of 1989.

Twenty-eight two year colleges which responded to the first survey were contacted with 20 responding. The purpose of the second survey was to pinpoint the exact reasons for test use, to evaluate instructor satisfaction with the measurement tool and to identify any trends in the adoption of any new measurement tools used for diagnosis and placement.

A sample of the survey, the results and conclusions follow. The second survey was individualized and identified each institution's original responses such as cut-off scores, follow-up testing and reading course components.

READING SURVEY  
FALL 1989

In the Spring 1988 survey, your institution indicated that the following test and cutoff scores were used for initial placement of entering students:

1. Is this test still in use?                     YES     NO

2. Have the cutoff scores been revised? Please indicate new scores.                     YES     NO

3. If the above test is presently in use, why did your institution select this placement tool?

4. If the above test is not in use, why was its use discontinued, what test is presently being used and what are the cutoff scores?

In the first survey, your institution indicated that the following was used for additional assessment:

5. Is this test still in use?                     YES     NO

6. Why was this test selected for additional assessment?

7. If the test used is an "in-house" test, please explain or, if possible, include a copy of this test.

8. Have there been any changes in your reading courses/reading program such as paired courses, additional levels of reading courses, CAI, etc.? Please explain.

9. The last survey indicated the major concern of reading educators was "the reading deficiencies of entering students coupled with the lack of time to deal with reading problems." Do you agree with this statement? Please comment.

10. Other comments regarding reading/reading courses/reading programs:

Send survey results to:

READING SURVEY  
FALL 1989

In the Spring 1988 survey, your institution indicated that the following test and cutoff scores were used for initial placement of entering students.

+-----+  
| Tests and cutoff scores were listed for each college. |  
+-----+

1. Is this test still in use?                      90% YES    10% NO
2. Have the cutoff scores been revised? Please indicate new scores.    10% YES    90% NO

+-----+  
| The change in the cut-off scores reflects the use of |  
| a new test used for placement. |  
+-----+

3. If the above test is presently in use, why did your institution select this placement tool?

- A. Nelson Denny Reading Test
- quick and easy to administer
  - community college norms
  - high reliability and validity
  - several forms available
  - grade levels scores
  - successful placement tool
- B. MAPS
- quick and easy to administer
  - community college norms
  - successful placement tool; reliable and practical
- C. DTLS
- offers "ballpark" placement
  - selected by CUNY
- D. Stanford
- best validated
  - widely used

4. If the above test is not in use, why was its use discontinued, what test is presently being used and what are the cutoff scores?

+-----+  
|  
| The two colleges (10%) have switched to ACT-ASSET. |  
| One college is planning on piloting this test. |  
+-----+

Reasons offered:

- an administrative decision
- efficiency and time constraints
- the attractiveness of the entire test package

In the first survey, your institution indicated that the following was used for additional assessment:

+-----+  
| Responses were listed for each college. |  
+-----+

5. Is this test still in use?                    100% YES                    NO
6. Why was this test selected for additional assessment?
- A. In-house
- easily evaluates student's progress during and end of semester
  - instructor's choice
  - match institution's population
- B. Stanford
- diagnostic information for isolated skills
  - range of test items
  - reliability and validity
- C. NDRT
- easily administered
  - time element
  - several forms available
  - instructor familiarity
  - assess reliability of ASSET
- D. DRP
- no time limit
  - format; cloze exercise
- E. CAT/Gates MacGinitie
- availability
  - provides a closer look at strengths and weaknesses
  - forms available for pre and post testing

7. If the test used is an "in-house" test, please explain or, if possible, include a copy of this test.

- All are of individual instructor design to assess skill or topic being addressed in class.

- Designed to have students apply reading skills to college readings

+-----+  
| Although in-house tests were listed as the primary |  
| measurement tool for additional assessment, no respondents |  
| forwarded copies of these tests. |  
+-----+

8. Have there been any changes in your reading courses/reading program such as paired courses, additional levels of reading courses, CAI, etc.? Please explain.

- Addition of reading courses/development of comprehensive reading program

- Supplemental instruction; study circles

- Development of more remedial/developmental courses

- Development of paired courses: reading with writing, psychology or sociology

- Use of CAI: Indiana University software

9. The last survey indicated the major concern of reading educators was "the reading deficiencies of entering students coupled with the lack of time to deal with reading problems." Do you agree with this statement? Please comment.

The respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the above statement and added these additional concerns:

- Need to maintain college credit for reading courses

- Enrollment in standard courses leads to frustration and student withdrawal from reading course/college

- Class size is often overwhelming and does not allow for individual attention

- Lack of faculty and administrative support

- Range of reading problems

- Increased number of LD students and limited staff

- Admission criteria



- Most instructors focus on content and offer little direction that might help students develop reading skills. Only the "reading" instructor is committed to attack this deficiency in the entering students with any regularity.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Within a year, there has been some movement at the two year college level in New York State to change the assessment tool used for diagnosis and placement of students. The trend seems to reflect the pervading feeling that current standardized tests do not meet the needs of the individual colleges to assess the abilities of the diverse student populations which are served. Presently, institutions "seem" to be moving toward more comprehensive tests such as the ACT-ASSET. These "packaged tests" can measure reading ability and provide an institution a "menu" from which to choose so that a writing or mathematics measurement tool can be added. Reading educators expressed concern regarding the adoption of these tests without being consulted and voiced hesitancy as to the reliability of these standardized tests. A reason for this trend of multiple assessment might be the current emphasis on assessment outcomes in New York State.

In addition, in-house tests for follow-up assessment remain the most commonly used tool. It is interesting to note that reading educators feel that they are best able to measure change by developing tools which reflect the materials which are used for instruction. An outgrowth of this would naturally seem to be the development of in-house tests for initial diagnosis and placement - a direction which

would more adequately assess the populations served by each institution.

Finally, the major concern among reading educators remains the lack of time and support to deal with the increasing number of students and particularly LD students. This issue can only be remedied through support of reading courses/programs by both Administration and fellow faculty.

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