

Sept 2010
Volume 3, Issue 1

Éirim News

Resource and information for schools and individuals interested in assessment & special needs

A quick note:

Welcome back to the new school year. I am sure that everyone is starting back with fresh new faces in front of them and plenty of fresh ideas for the new term.

We have packed this newsletter with news and plenty of tips to get you started in the new term.

As always we are interested to hear your comments and feedback.

Please e-mail us your input to news@eirim.ie

Rebecca James

Director

Welcome back by RJ

Welcome back everyone to the new school year. Here in Éirim we have been busy even through the summer months. Apart from providing assessments as usual, we got involved in a number of events including research, training and sitting in as part of an expert advisory panel for Irish universities.

We attended the International School Psychology conference in Trinity College and Kate James, psychologist with Eirim, was awarded a prize for her research on the use of different spelling tests in Ireland. The findings were very interesting and food for thought for anyone administering or sourcing spelling tests. You can read a summary of her findings below.

Éirim was part of an expert panel that convened over the summer holidays to agree revisions to the 2010/2011 DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) criteria. A summary will be published in our next December newsletter or visit www.accesscollege.ie

Éirim hosted another very successful 4 day training course leading to the Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing (Level A). It was held in Bewley's Hotel Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. The dates for the next course are:

Date: 22-25th November 2010

Venue: Ballsbridge, Dublin 4

Spelling Test use in Ireland

Ms. Kate James, Éirim, received a high commendation for her research and poster presentation "Spelling Tests in Ireland" at the International Schools Psychology Association conference (ISPA), July 2010.

The findings of Kate's ongoing research are extremely interesting, particularly for those that are using spelling tests to apply for Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations.

Summary of Kate's research:
In Ireland spelling tests provide a critical source of evidence in granting certain accommodations in national Certificate examinations.

Students with a specific learning disability may apply for a spelling and grammar waiver, which means that, in language subjects, spelling and grammar are not assessed.

Department of Education guidelines indicate that in order to qualify for a waiver, spelling ability should be at least one standard deviation below the mean (i.e. a standard score of below 85).

There is no specified spelling test, and none of the tests in common use for that age range (14-19) has been standardised in Ireland. There is a common view that some spelling tests are 'easier' than others but

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“There are significant differences between the scores on different spelling tests”



there is no evidence to demonstrate this. This study compared the performance of 210 5th Year students aged between 15 and 17 on four spelling tests that are in relatively common use in Ireland, the British Ability Scales (BAS-II), Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT4), Woodcock Johnson (WJ-III) and the Wechsler Individual Attainment Test (WIAT-II).

Results

Results indicated that there are significant differences between the scores on the different spelling tests used in Ireland; using the British

Ability Scales spelling test, over 15% of the students would score at a standard score below 85 and thus may be eligible for a spelling and grammar waiver while fewer than 2% of those administered the Wide Range Achievement Test would do so.

The difference between getting and not getting an exam accommodation may depend more on the psychologist's choice of test than on the spelling ability of the candidate.

Thank you to all the schools that participated in this research.

Positive Classroom Management

by RJ

In this series we print a series of tips regarding classroom management

Tip #1

Agree on Classroom Rules at the beginning of the year

Taking time out for this simple step can prevent a lot of misery in the long run. Experienced teachers suggest engaging students actively in the process of determining a set of class rules. Taking this preventative measure creates a positive climate from the start.

Tip #2

Start Class with a Mind Warm-Up

A classic warm-up is to ask students to find the mistakes planted in material written on the board. (You can use this idea in any subject area.) But instead of asking them to work silently and alone, and then debrief in a classic question-and-answer session with one student at a time (while many sit inattentively), use a mix of collaboration and competition to eliminate what could potentially become dead time.

Here's how: Organize teams of three students and ask them to work together (quietly) and raise their hands when they think they have found all the mistakes. After the first team signals it's done, give a bit more time and then have teams indicate with their fingers -- together on the count of three -- the number of mistakes they found in the work. The team that found the most describes its answers until another team disagrees politely or until they are finished.

Useful Websites:

- www.senteacher.org

Good website providing lots of free resources which can be downloaded.

- www.pareonline.net

Free online journal on assessment and research (a bit technical)

- www.pearson.co.uk - test publisher's site

- www.brainworx.ie - Irish test publisher's website

If you have found any websites particular useful please e-mail them to us and we would be delighted to share it with others in the next newsletter.

****All of these websites and more can be found on our website www.eirim.ie under the useful links section**

**Notes for your Diary**

- Psychological Society of Ireland

PSI's 40th Annual conference is being held in the Sheraton Hotel, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.
www.psihq.ie

- Training in Educational Assessment
4 day course in Dublin leading to a certificate in educational assessment. Awarded by the British Psychological Society (BPS). **November 22nd - 25th**; Dublin Contact training@eirim.ie

Did you know:

The word 'pound' is abbreviated 'lb.' after the constellation 'libra' because it means 'pound' in Latin, and also 'scales'.

Riddle me this

A Cowboy rides into town on Friday, stays five days then leaves on Friday. How is this possible?

See page 6 for the answer





Feature:

Top Ten back to school tips for Resource Teachers



“try to set up two folders for each child”

1. Organize all that paperwork

Special Ed teachers handle lots of paperwork and documentation throughout the year. Try to set up two separate folders or binders for each child in your class: one for keeping track of student work and assessment data and the other for keeping track of all other documentation.

2. Start a communication log

Keeping track of all phone calls, e-mails, notes home and meetings is important. Create a “communication log” for yourself in a notebook that is easily accessible. Be sure to note the dates, times, and nature of the communications you have.

3. Review your students’ IEPs

The IEP is the cornerstone of every child’s educational program, so it’s important that you have a clear understanding of each IEP you’re responsible for. Get a feel for where your students are and what they need by carefully reviewing the present levels of performance, services, and modifications in the IEP. Note any upcoming IEP meetings, reviews, or other key dates, and mark your calendar now. Make a note when new assessments are needed.

4. Establish a daily schedule for you and your students

It’s important to establish your daily schedule. Design your

schedule realistically and be sure to design your schedule around the student’s IEP. Don’t forget to incorporate breaks into your schedule. Children, particularly those with learning difficulties, often tire quickly. And keep in mind that this schedule will most likely change during the year!

5. Call your students’ families

Take the time to introduce yourself with a brief phone call before school starts. You’ll be working with these students and their families for at least the next school year, and a simple “hello” from their future teacher can ease some tensions and encourage a good working relationship!

6. Touch base with related service providers

It’s important to contact the related service providers – psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech & language therapists, or counselors – in your school as soon as possible to establish a schedule of times for your students who need these services. The earlier you touch base, the more likely you’ll be able to arrange times that work for everyone.

7. Meet with your class co-teachers

Communicating with your class co-teachers will be important throughout the year, so get a head start on establishing this important relationship now! Share all of the information you



“call and introduce yourself to the child’s parents”



Feature:

Top Ten back to school tips for resource teachers

can about schedules, students, and IEPs so that you're ready to start the year.

8. Keep everyone informed

All additional school staff such as assistants and class teachers who will be working with your students need to be aware of their needs and their IEPs before school starts. Organize a way to keep track of who has read through the IEPs, and be sure to update your colleagues if the IEPs change during the school year.

9. Plan your assessments

As soon as school starts, teachers start conducting their beginning of the year assessments. Assessment data is used to update IEPs – and to shape your instruction – so it's important to keep track of which

students need which assessments. Get started by making a checklist of student names, required assessments, and a space for scores. This will help you stay organized and keep track of data once testing begins.

10. Start and stay positive

As a special educator, you'll have lots of responsibilities this year, and it may seem overwhelming at times. If your focus is on the needs of your students and their success, you'll stay motivated and find ways to make everything happen. Being positive, flexible, and organized from the start will help you and your students have a successful year.

Adapted from Reading Rockets.



New Intelligence test hits Ireland!

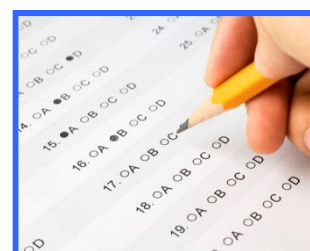
-review of the new WAIS IV intelligence test

For those of you that don't know about the **WAIS (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale)**, it is probably the most popular Intelligence test used by psychologists on the adult and adolescent populations in the world. The most recent version of the test, the **WAIS IV** has just recently been released in Ireland.

Brief history of the WAIS

David Wechsler devised and first published the original **WAIS in 1955**. It was designed to measure intellectual ability with individuals aged between 16 - 90

years (the WISC and WPPSI are also Wechsler intelligence tests but designed for younger ages). Wechsler defined intelligence as "The global capacity of a person to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his/her environment." Most other tests around that time comprised of mainly verbal IQ elements but because the Wechsler tests included non-verbal items (known as performance scales) as well as verbal items for all test-takers it became highly





Feature:

Cont: New Intelligence test hits Ireland!



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"The new WAIS IV, has seen a number of changes from its predecessor, the WAIS III."

popular and surpassed Lewis Terman's Stanford-Binet tests in popularity by the 1960's.

New WAIS IV

The new WAIS IV, the fourth edition of the test, has seen a number of changes from its predecessor, the WAIS III. The WAIS-IV was originally standardized on a sample of 2,200 people in the United States ranging in age from 16 to 90. An Anglicised version (WAIS IV UK) was published earlier this year after research showed that the test was valid for use in the UK.

For those of you familiar with the WISC IV and WPPSI, the WAIS IV's organization is more in line now with these. For example, it is composed of 10 core subtests and five supplemental subtests, with the 10 core subtests comprising the Full Scale IQ. There are four index scores representing major components of intelligence on WAIS IV:

1. Verbal Comprehension Index (VCI)
2. Perceptual Reasoning Index (PRI)
3. Working Memory Index (WMI)
4. Processing Speed Index (PSI)

Main Changes & Benefits

Some of the main changes and benefits of new WAIS-IV are:

- Norms have been updated which means that the scores are more accurate and

representative of the current population (people tend to get inflated scores on the older WAIS III).

- Obsolete subtests have been replaced with new subtests e.g.
 - Visual Puzzles subtest added
- FSIQ and GAI scores can be obtained
- There is reduced emphasis on motor ability and speed (less time bonuses)
- Administration time is reduced (reducing effects of fatigue)

Common uses of the WAIS IV in education

- To identify specific learning difficulties in people aged 16 or over
- To apply for Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations
- To apply for entrance to Third level colleges through the Disability route

Éirim is currently using the new WAIS IV. If you would like to book an assessment please contact our office.

We are also providing training for psychologists in the WAIS-IV. For details please contact our office.

Answer to Riddle me this:

The horses name is Friday!

Aspergirls: An insight into Aspergers in girls



Most teachers have now heard of Asperger's Syndrome but most probably think of men or boys who are diagnosed. It is true that males are four times as likely to be affected but girls can also have Aspergers although it may not be recognized as such.

Now, Rudy Simone, a female sufferer of AS, has written *Aspergirls*, a book that explains how the condition presents differently in girls; how they can be diagnosed and helped, and how they can help themselves.

Rudy, 46, an author and jazz singer, lives with her partner Mike Whipple in San Francisco. Her youth was spent struggling with her identity. "I always felt different from my family; they seemed unpredictable and frightening. I was known to be gifted intellectually but I was so profoundly affected by Aspergers that as puberty kicked in, I went through bouts of mutism which could last hours or even a whole day." She oscillated from performing for attention to shutting down completely - a swing of moods which she says is typical for "Aspergirls".

Other symptoms included an aversion to certain types of fabric or clothing, of smells, even foods. And like most people with AS, she developed obsessions. "Some people read hundreds of fantasy books; I read *The Chronicles of Narnia* hundreds of times. I would become so focused on a record I would literally wear it out playing it over again. I was always being told I was strange and different. 'Why can't you be normal?' they would say. It would set off a cycle of guilt and confusion and depression at my inability to fit in."

Most of the symptoms she describes are similar to those exhibited by men: difficulty understanding gestures, facial expressions or tone of voice; difficulty understanding jokes,

metaphor and sarcasm; the struggle to make and maintain friendships; the difficulty in understanding other people's thoughts, feelings or actions; and the obsession with hobbies and interests. Where girls differ is that they are often better at mimicking and copying their peers, so they stand out less than boys. Their obsessions are not based so often on numbers and engineering (as with boys), but instead focus on animals, actors or pop stars.

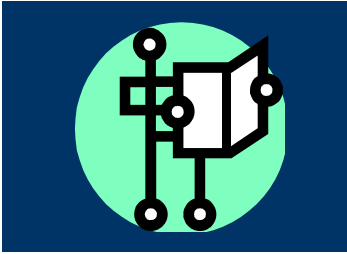
Rudy admits she has found it difficult to make friends. "I don't actually have a single close girlfriend. I've tried my whole life, but now I accept that I know lots of women I like, but none that I am close to. We are trusting and sometimes emotionally naive. If we get hurt, we tend to burn bridges. My bluntness and honesty - what some would call tactlessness - can get me into trouble. I have learnt to keep some things to myself."

Motherhood is not easy, either. Rudy has an 18-year-old daughter, Lena. "It's been very difficult for her to have an Aspie-mum. I have embarrassed her at times," she admits.

But Rudy is keen to explode the myth that Asperger's is an unremitting disability. "There are many good things to be said about Aspergirls. We are highly intuitive. We have an incredible ability to concentrate and a work ethic which makes us employable in the right jobs." It saddens her that Aspergirls are still left on the margins of society: "So much of our world is about appearance and confidence, as opposed to substance," she says. "We aren't fake. We're not like that."



"I always felt different from my family; they seemed unpredictable and frightening.."



Quote Corner

*"Education is not preparation for life;
education is life itself."*

John Dewey

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About Our Company.....

Éirim: The National Assessment Agency Ltd conducts educational assessments for both private individuals, educational institutions and the HSE. All of our reports are accepted by NEPS and can be utilized to apply for resource hours/exemptions/SNA's etc.

Éirim is also running both online & intensive training courses leading to the Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing. This course has been verified by the British Psychological Society (BPS).

We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.eirim.ie

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