

The Wechsler Individual Achievement Test - Second UK Edition for Teachers (WIAT-IIUK for Teachers): a comprehensive assessment of literacy skills

The WIAT-II^{UK}-T can be used in any situation in which a standardised assessment of reading or spelling achievement may prove useful. **Pearson Assessment** provides an introduction and an insight to the uses and benefits of this test.

Introduction

Supporting students with literacy difficulties and in particular dyslexia became a government priority, following the publication of Sir Jim Rose's Dyslexia Review in June 2009, which identified that between 4% and 8% of children's literacy attainment may be affected by dyslexia (Rose, 2009).

As the Expert Advisory Group highlighted there are a number of key features and working definitions of dyslexia; among these, difficulties with phonological processing, including phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed were highlighted as reliable markers evidenced through extensive research (Vellutino et al, 2004. Snowling, 2008).

Early identification and targeted intervention in these areas is proven to make a difference. The Wechsler Individual Achievement Test[®] – Second UK Edition for Teachers (WIAT-II^{UK}-T), can be an invaluable tool in this assessment process. Individually administered, the WIAT-II^{UK}-T is suitable for individuals aged 4:0 to 85:11, its standardised scores may provide useful evidence for identifying strengths and weaknesses often associated with dyslexia and other literacy difficulties.

Background to the WIAT-II^{UK}-T Adaptation

The WIAT-II^{UK} was previously the domain of the Educational Psychologist, and part of the Wechsler battery of tests, renowned internationally for their reliability, validity and utility. In response to calls from specialist teachers, three of the subtests from the full WIAT-II^{UK}

battery were adapted to form the WIAT-II^{UK}-T, a reliable and valid assessment tool that identifies difficulties with literacy.

UK Standardisation Project

The WIAT-II^{UK} was standardised on 892 individuals between the ages of 4:0 and 16:11 years in the UK in 2004. Designed to clarify the relationship between score levels in the UK and the US, it features comprehensive normative information including age-based standard scores, percentiles, stanines, normal curve equivalents (NCEs), and age equivalents for each of the subtests.

The WIAT-II^{UK}-T features UK norms for individuals aged 6:0 to 16:11. US norms for ages 17:0 to 85:0 are also available. The norms were derived from a sample representative of the UK population of children (based on the 2001 Census). The sample incorporated 12 geographic regions, 2 levels of gender, 33 levels of age, 4 levels of race/ethnic group and 5 levels of parent educational level.

An Anglicisation project also took place to ensure that subtest items, illustrations, spellings, questions and accepted responses met the needs of a UK audience.

Overview of Subtests

The three subtests included in the assessment are:

Word Reading

The Word Reading subtest measures phonological awareness, word recognition and decoding skills. At the younger age levels, individuals are asked to complete tasks including the

ability to name letters of the alphabet, identify and generate rhyming words, identify beginning and ending sounds of words, blend sounds into words, and match sounds with letters and letter blends. The subword level was included based on extensive research by Virginia Berninger, University of Washington, who identified the importance of addressing both low-level (word recognition) and high-level (comprehension) skills, and all levels of language in assessment and instruction (Berninger, V. 1989, 2001). Correlational studies have identified that phonological awareness and letter knowledge are excellent predictors of how well children learn to read during the first two years of instruction and that delays in the development of phonological awareness have been found in children with developmental reading disabilities (Alexander, Anderson, Heilman, Voeller & Torgesen, 1991; Bradley, MacLean, Bryant & Crossland, 1990). Word recognition is assessed at all ages. In addition, word reading accuracy is scored, and word reading automaticity and self-corrections are marked for qualitative analysis.

Reading Comprehension

Key research by Kate Nation and Courtenay Frazier Norbury highlights that, 'the ultimate goal of reading is to understand what has been written and although the ability to decode individual words is a crucial first step, it is no guarantee that adequate comprehension will follow' (2005). It is therefore significant that Rose's report sets out language comprehension as one of the markers in identifying children who may have dyslexia. The Reading Comprehension subtest assesses the



types of skills that are taught in the classroom or used in everyday life. It measures; literal, inferential and lexical comprehension, reading rate, oral reading accuracy and fluency, and word recognition in context. The WIAT-II^{UK}-T also scores a reading rate which identifies the slow and accurate, slow and inaccurate, fast and accurate, and fast and inaccurate reader. Together this may help identify learners who may be dyslexic and struggle with reading.

Spelling

The spelling subtest assesses the individual's ability to spell dictated letters, letter blends and words; tasks that require phonological skills, orthographic skills and the knowledge of phoneme-spelling correspondence. As skills which may be affected in individuals with dyslexia, the raw score may provide an indication of dyslexia when reviewed with the other subtest results.

Uses of the WIAT-II^{UK}-T in an educational setting

The WIAT-II^{UK}-T can be used in any situation in which a standardised assessment of reading or spelling achievement could prove useful:

Assessing the effectiveness of intervention

The scores which can be obtained from the WIAT-II^{UK}-T can be valuable in establishing a baseline and in measuring progress following intervention. Research has shown that 'a good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention.' (Rose, 2009).

Access Arrangements

The WIAT-II^{UK}-T can be used to provide evidence of literacy difficulties when making applications for access arrangements. Caroline Read, Founder of Communicate-ed explains: 'This American test is unique in that it has been adapted and revised for the UK market and is aimed specifically at specialist teachers. Covering a wide age range, it provides tests of untimed single word reading, reading comprehension, reading speed and single word spelling, therefore covering many of the requirements for assessments for Access Arrangements'.

DSA

The WIAT-II^{UK}-T has been placed on the list of accepted assessments for applications for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) under *Attainments in Literacy*.

Conclusion

The WIAT-II^{UK}-T is one of the most comprehensive UK-normed assessments suitable for use by specialist teachers. Covering single word reading, reading comprehension, reading rate and spelling, the WIAT-II^{UK}-T provides a rich source of information that can be used to identify individuals with learning difficulties in literacy.

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