Remote Assessment in Educational Settings

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Timeline

• March 15, 2020: Gov. Baker closes MA schools for three weeks, an order which was subsequently extended to the remainder of the school year.
• May 13, 2020: The Inter-Organizational Practice Committee issues tele-neuropsychology guidelines for practice during COVID-19.
• May 21, 2020: Dr. Russell Johnston, state director of special education at DESE, issues a technical assistance advisory stating: “When in the best interest of the student, the Department recommends that schools and districts conduct assessments remotely. If assessments require in-person observation or face-to-face administration, assessments may need to be delayed until they are able to be done in-person. The Department recognizes that not all assessments may be conducted virtually, as a remote evaluation may invalidate results.”
Challenges to in-person assessment during COVID pandemic

• Like any in-person service, testing involves incidental contacts (people near each other in waiting rooms, bathrooms, hallways, etc.)
• Traditional psychological and educational testing requires extended 1:1 work.
• Many tests involve use of manipulatives (e.g., Block Design blocks).
• Spaces allocated for testing are variable in terms of permitting physical distancing and in terms of ventilation.
## Performance based versus non-performance based assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance-Based</th>
<th>Non-performance based</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Intellectual tests</td>
<td>• Parent and teacher interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Educational tests</td>
<td>• Student Observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Speech/language, OT, and neuropsychological tests</td>
<td>• Standardized questionnaires</td>
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How much information can we pull out of non-performance based methods?

Can we validly administer performance-based assessments remotely?
Technological developments supporting distanced performance-based assessment

- Widespread use of online meeting platforms such as Zoom
- Digitization of test materials and dissemination of platforms for web-based access by companies such as Pearson (Q-Global)
- Availability of adjunctive devices such as high-definition document cameras
Challenges to remote performance-based assessment

- Variability in student access to, and support with, computer technology and internet connectivity.
- Availability of appropriate test-taking environments in non-traditional settings.
- Applicability of traditionally-derived norms to test results obtained via remote assessment.
- Barriers to capture of subtle observational data during testing.
Practice Models

- Full in-person, with precautions
  - Precautions may include standard PPE, air filtration, doorway screening, etc.
  - Precautions may also include technology and modifications designed to allow physical distancing on-site (e.g., video enabled monitors)
- Full remote, non-performance based only
- Full remote, with performance and non-performance based
- Hybrid in-person/remote
  - For example: short tele-sessions preceding a single, longer in-person visit.
MA Psychological Association and MA Neuropsychological Society joint statement on special needs assessment during COVID

• Issued June 8, 2020, this statement addresses the activities of licensed psychologist-health providers.

• The document acknowledges that remote assessment is not appropriate for all students. However, it also highlights the many drawbacks of failing to use remote assessment in any capacity. These include lack of assessment of eligibility; lack of assessment of progress; and pressure to provide more hours of in-person assessment.

• The MPA/MNS statement therefore recommends that these assessments be used judiciously.