Responding to School Psychology Practice Needs: The WJ IV ECAD and WIIIP
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Two new additions to the WJ IV™ family of assessments, the WJ IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development (ECAD®) and the WJ IV Interpretation and Instructional Interventions Program (WIIIP®), offer exciting new possibilities for assessment and intervention. School psychologists who conduct cognitive assessments at the preschool, Kindergarten, and Grade 1 levels may be particularly interested in the design, purposes, and utility of the ECAD. Many school psychologists have eagerly anticipated the release of the WIIIP because it links WJ IV test and cluster scores to evidence-based instructional interventions.

In response to professional practice needs expressed by many school psychologists, the WJ IV development team has completed work on two new tools that complement, expand, and increase the interpretive value of the WJ IV. These tools expand the assessment capabilities and interpretive relevance of the WJ IV Tests of Cognitive Abilities (WJ IV COG; Schrank, McGrew, & Mather, 2014); the WJ IV Tests of Achievement (WJ IV ACH; Schrank, Mather, & McGrew, 2014), or the WJ IV Tests of Oral Language (WJ IV OL; Schrank, Mather, & McGrew, 2014) into a complete, evidence-based assessment-to-intervention system for all years of formal schooling.

Many school psychologists who have responsibilities for evaluations at the preschool, Kindergarten, and Grade 1 levels will want to have access to the ECAD because the battery is particularly sensitive to—and can identify developmental delays in—important aspects of emerging cognitive abilities and academic skills.

WJ IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development

A new battery of tests has been added to the WJ IV family of assessments that provides a focus on the cognitive and academic development of young children. The WJ IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development (ECAD; Schrank, McGrew, & Mather, 2015) is a special-purpose battery of tests, contained within a single easel, designed primarily for use with children of ages 3–7. By creating the ECAD, the WJ IV authors responded to a need—expressed by many colleagues over the years—for a dedicated battery of cognitive and early academic skills tests to measure both the emergence and development of the different broad CHC abilities at the preschool and early primary levels. Several insightful school psychologists suggested that CHC theory could be particularly helpful for determining if a young child’s cognitive abilities are developing as expected, and if specific cognitive abilities are delayed, CHC theory would be especially useful for identifying early intervention needs during a critical window of time when targeted educational efforts can yield the greatest gains.

Scientifically sound, evidence-based cognitive interventions in the WIIIP add relevance to an assessment and enhance the school psychologists’ role and function on an evaluation team.

The ten ECAD tests measure emerging cognitive abilities and academic skills in a format that is interesting and attractive to young children. The ECAD uses engaging and colorful art to capture a young child’s imagination. Some of the tests are unique to the ECAD while others are adapted and alternate forms of tests that are also included in other parts of the WJ IV assessment system. Tests that are unique to the ECAD include Memory for Names, Verbal Analogies, Visual Closure, and Number Sense.

The ECAD is thoughtfully engineered to complement—rather than replicate—the other batteries in the WJ IV family of assessments. Although six of the measures are alternate forms of tests that also reside in the other WJ IV batteries, the ECAD versions have greater item density to capture changes in growth and development in young children. Because the tests are alternate forms, children who are subsequently evaluated with the WJ IV COG, WJ IV OL, or WJ IV ACH are not exposed to the same sets of items. However, the common W-score metric is useful for measuring growth and change in ability from the preschool age to the school years. This is particularly important for skills and abilities that typically increase rapidly during this period of development, such as those measured by the Letter-Word Identification, Rapid Picture Naming, Sentence Repetition, and Writing tests. The ECAD Sound Blending and Picture Vocabulary tests also have different items from, and increased item density when compared to their corresponding WJ IV OL tests.
The ECAD is particularly useful for identifying cognitive developmental delay and the provision of non-categorical individual education plans for young children. IDEA (2004) requires public schools to provide screening and comprehensive assessment for developmental delay for children beginning at age 3. When cognitive development is an area of referral concern, school psychologists may be called upon to provide an appropriate assessment to identify needs so that an individual education plan can be put in place to increase the trajectory of ability and skill development.

**WJ IV Interpretation and Instructional Interventions Program**

Following the publication of the WJ IV, many school psychologists eagerly awaited the release of the WJ IV Interpretation and Instructional Interventions Program (WIIIP; Schrank & Wendling, 2015), which is now available. The WIIIP is an online program option that helps school psychologists and other members of the evaluation team interpret the results of the WJ IV and links test and cluster scores from any of the Woodcock-Johnson® IV (Schrank, McGrew, & Mather, 2014a) batteries to associated instructional interventions. In addition, a number of qualitative checklists provide context to an individual’s WJ IV scores that make an evaluation with the WJ IV more comprehensive.

The WJ IV family of assessments is the most comprehensive and contemporary evaluation-interpretation-intervention system available.

Without a doubt, however, the most exciting benefit of the WIIIP is the link to evidence-based interventions, formative interventions, relevant suggestions, and accommodations that can be used to individualize a student’s educational plan, teach strategies for learning, and improve prospects for successful outcomes. Over the past decades, cognitive neuroscience research has yielded hundreds of interventions for deficits in reading, mathematics, written language, and oral language development.

What is particularly intriguing for many school psychologists is that the WIIIP links WJ IV COG results to dozens of evidence-based interventions, recommendations, or accommodations that can help teams address limitations identified from tests that measure specific cognitive abilities. Although many individuals develop cognitive abilities through incidental learning, for some students, specific types of knowledge, reasoning, or even processing skills may need to be explicitly modeled, taught, and practiced in an educational setting.

For example, the deceivingly simple mnemonic “repeat to remember” is actually a memory strategy that is firmly rooted in cognitive neuroscience. When effectively implemented, the oral-repetition process directs the student’s working memory to the word or name to be learned. Repeating a new vocabulary word results in effortful, focused attention on the word during the storage phase of learning so that the consolidation process is more likely to encode a semantic memory (Medina, 2008). Because teachers and parents often look to school psychologists to provide sound neuro-scientific guidance when specific cognitive limitations are identified, linking the results of cognitive assessment to instructional strategies, learning objectives, and intervention plans makes WJ IV cognitive assessment more relevant than ever before.

**Better Together: The WJ IV Family of Assessments**

Together, the WJ IV batteries and tools form a comprehensive, theoretically based contemporary assessment, interpretation, and intervention system that school psychologists can use from the preschool level and throughout the years of formal education. The ECAD is co-normed with the WJ IV COG, WJ IV ACH, and WJ IV OL batteries and shares the common CHC interpretive model. The ECAD, however, is a dedicated, single easel/single test record selection of the most appropriate tests for determining if cognitive and academic abilities are developing as expected.

The WIIIP is a value-added complement to the WJ IV family of assessments. The WIIIP increases the relevance of a WJ IV assessment for professional practice with evidence-based interventions and practical suggestions for the educational program of a student—recommendations that may not have surfaced if the WJ IV was not used. The WIIIP authors have been sourcing evidence-based instructional interventions to link to the WJ IV COG, WJ IV ACH, and WJ IV OL for several years; those are available now in the WIIIP. Evidence-based interventions are also now linked to the ECAD tests and clusters.

**References**


