The Issue: Within an assessment battery, different types of testing tools are needed, with each tool serving a clear and specific purpose. Yet there is much confusion about the intended and appropriate use of assessments; some types of assessments are overused while others are not used at all.

A Primer on Assessment Type

Diagnostic Assessments

How should I focus my daily instruction?

- Gather in-depth information about children’s instructional needs
- Provide immediate feedback on instruction (e.g., end-of-unit tests, running records)

Screening Assessments

Are children meeting benchmarks?

- Determine which children are at risk for difficulties in particular literacy components
- Provide information on how children are performing relative to same-aged peers using a valid, external benchmark (Find examples at www.rti4success.org)

Progress Monitoring Assessments

Are children responding to instruction?

- Determine if instruction is helping children make adequate progress or if they need more intensive interventions
- Provide a reference point for children's performance outside of day-to-day activities (Find examples at www.rti4success.org)

Outcome Assessments

Are we delivering quality instruction?

- Gauge achievement levels for the site's overall population and for particular groups (e.g., children growing up in low-income or non-English-speaking homes)
- Determine effectiveness of the site's program(s) (e.g., the state test)

What Are Some Common Pitfalls That Impede Impact?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Pitfalls</th>
<th>What We’re Learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Using one assessment for many different purposes.</td>
<td>1. Often publishers claim that one test can provide multiple types of information. In reality, most tests can serve one purpose well.</td>
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<td>2. Not using screening or progress monitoring assessments as part of the assessment battery, and instead relying on diagnostics.</td>
<td>2. To understand literacy risk, settings need measures that have an external benchmark, especially for screening and progress monitoring. Diagnostic assessments (even those from a formal kit) do not provide a valid and reliable external benchmark.</td>
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<td>3. Thinking standardized assessments are inauthentic or too removed from instruction to be useful.</td>
<td>3. While the tasks may seem disconnected or silly, standardized literacy assessments give clear indications of risks and often reveal problems that may not be apparent from day-to-day interactions alone.</td>
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The Bottom Line:

A comprehensive assessment approach uses —

- measures of literacy skills and knowledge (Memo 6)
- a combination of assessment types

For More on This...

Much of the guidance provided in this memo is drawn from Making Assessment Matter: Using Test Results to Differentiate Reading Instruction by N. Lesaux & S. Marietta.

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