

**Compendium of Instruments for Assessing the Skills and Interests of
Individuals with Visual Impairments or Multiple Disabilities,
Second Edition**

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Background

The National Agenda

The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities was developed to establish clear-cut, timely educational reforms to ensure that all students receive the free and appropriate education to which they are entitled under the law. A complete report of the findings of the National Agenda project is in A Report to the Nation, published by the American Foundation for the Blind. The sixth goal of the National Agenda project proposes that “assessment of students will be conducted, in collaboration with parents, by personnel having expertise in the education of students with visual impairments.” The National Center for Vision and Child Development was asked to propose how this goal can be met.

National Agenda Survey

The National Center for Vision and Child Development prepared a questionnaire for assessment clinicians, to define the current status of the assessment of students with visual impairment or multiple disabilities. The questionnaire asked about the assessment of the following: vision, general health, general psychological state, cognitive abilities, language development, social development, motor development, orientation and mobility, activities of daily living, technology skills, leisure interests, learning style, vocational interests, home and community environment, student and family goals, student interests, and student self-concept. The results of 130 completed surveys were compiled, representing clinicians working in forty-five states.

Documentation

What Is the Compendium?

The original compendium was an annotated list of assessment instruments specified by the respondents to the questionnaire and those recommended by experts in the field. The respondents to the questionnaire cited 150 standardized assessment instruments. Those included in the original compendium were specified by the respondents were used by at least five percent of all respondents who assess a particular area, meeting the criterion of utilization by a significant percentage of respondents. Instruments were not specified for all areas of interest, and significant numbers were specified for only the following: vision, cognitive abilities/intelligence, academic aptitude, motor skills, orientation and mobility, language development, psychosocial development, and vocational interests. Locally or institutionally developed assessment instruments, typically not standardized on large, representative samples nor available commercially, were not included, since a significant portion of the respondents did not use them. In addition, instruments for the assessment of functional vision, and other aspects of vision were added to the original compendium even though respondents to the survey did not cite them. These instruments were added to provide a more comprehensive list of areas to assess, and instruments with which to assess them. The 167 instruments cited in the original compendium therefore reflected a broad list of instruments for the assessment of vital areas of development for those with visual impairment or multiple disabilities.

Context for the Second Edition

Response to original compendium was very favorable. Many special education instructors and school psychologists in the field, called upon to assess students with visual impairment or multiple disabilities, reported that the compendium provided a wealth of information. These professionals found it useful both for the guidance toward and proper usage of standard assessment instruments with these populations. However, newer versions of existing assessment instruments, and new instruments are frequently published. Additionally, normative data requires constant updates. As such, an updated compendium became necessary. Many of the instruments cited in the original compendium remain, with their reviews unchanged. The current edition also includes newer versions of instruments cited in the original compendium, as well as both new and old instruments not cited by the respondents to the National Agenda survey, but nevertheless useful in the assessment of students with visual impairment and multiple disabilities.

For Whom Is the Compendium Intended?

This compendium is intended to be a guide to assessment instruments that are available to clinicians who assess students with visual impairment or multiple disabilities. As such, each of the instruments specified was researched and evaluated, in terms of both its general merits and its utility in assessing students with visual impairment or multiple disabilities. The compendium is a resource for vision teachers, psychologists, and other school specialists who assess these students.

How Were Assessment Instruments Evaluated?

Assessment instruments were evaluated regarding their content, statistical properties and appropriateness for use with students with visual impairment or multiple disabilities. Basic information about each instrument was gathered from test manuals and/or references that evaluate these instruments, such as Mental Measurements Yearbooks and Tests in Print. The publisher of each instrument was contacted in order to verify the information gleaned from the primary sources. Finally, vision experts employed by Lighthouse International or directing education programs designed to train vision teachers, in consultation with the National Center for Vision and Child Development, evaluated the information based on their actual use of the instruments with students with visual impairment or multiple disabilities. For newly released assessment instruments, reviews were not typically available.

Using Curriculum Instruments for Assessment

During the preparation of the compendium, it became clear that many assessors use teaching curricula as a means of assessment. While teaching curricula are invaluable as structured, research-based interventions designed to impart knowledge or skills, they should not be used as a formal assessment, even when they include assessment instruments. Rather, these assessments are intended to be brief measures of progress, assessing improvement since the introduction of the teaching curricula, or as a means of determining where within the teaching sequence the individual falls. These assessments typically are not exhaustive measures of the skills and behaviors they purport to assess. In addition, assessment instruments included in teaching curricula often do not undergo

the same rigid validation and normative procedures that standardized assessment instruments do; and typically have no reliability and validity data available for determining an individual's ability level.

How Exhaustive Is the Compendium?

This compendium is not intended to be comprehensive. An exhaustive literature search revealed numerous instruments that are available commercially or through private institutions, but which are not included. However, many of these instruments were not included because they do not reflect accurate assessment of the specified area of assessment; or because these instruments are not utilized by those conducting assessments for reasons such as difficulty of use, lack of training in their use, or lack of availability. Feedback regarding the instruments cited in the compendium is welcomed. A form is included in the back of the compendium, with instructions for providing information about specific instruments. Information is welcome regarding instruments that have been included in the compendium and those which have not been included. There may also be a need for further review of specialty tests, which is beyond the scope of this compendium.

How Current Is the List of Instruments Cited?

In an effort to recommend currently available assessment instruments, the compendium includes the most recent version of each instrument. Those conducting assessments often indicated that they use older versions of an instrument, a large number of which are no longer published or sold commercially. In addition, many publishers

report that response forms are no longer available for the outdated tests. Most instruments that are no longer in print are not covered in the compendium, and it is preferable not to use them. However, several of the classic assessment instruments developed specifically for those with visual impairment and multiple disabilities were included, as they remain very useful in providing descriptive data, although the normative data is considered suspect due to its age. Newer versions of instruments are published for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to: more valid and/or reliable items, scales and/or scores, more comprehensive or brief (in the case of a newly developed screening instrument) assessment of the area under inquiry, improved or newly adapted testing materials, and normalization on more representative samples. Sometimes, new versions of instruments include adaptations or guidelines for the adaptation of items for those with specific impairments. Finally, normative data eventually becomes dated, and the validity of an instrument can be called into question.

Using the Compendium

How Do I Go About Choosing One or More Instruments?

To aid the clinician in selecting an appropriate assessment instrument, three indexes have been prepared. The specific index chosen by one conducting an assessment depends on his or her needs. A description of each index follows. In addition, a series of summary tables for each index has been prepared, from which specific information about each instrument can be gleaned. These tables allow for side by side comparison of instruments, to ease the selection process.

Alphabetical Index of Instruments

The first index to the compendium is an alphabetical list of all the instruments cited. It reflects the organization of the compendium. This index is useful for ascertaining whether an instrument is frequently used for the assessment of students with visual impairment or multiple disabilities.

Index of Instruments by Area of Assessment

The second index lists the instruments according to area of assessment. When a clinician seeks information about instruments that assess one or more specific areas, but not with a specific age group in mind, this index should be consulted. Instruments are grouped according to the following areas of assessment: vision, cognitive abilities/intelligence, academic aptitude, motor development, orientation and mobility, daily living skills, language skills, psychosocial development, and vocational interests. Many instruments assess more than one area, and those are listed under each of the areas that they assess. For the assessment of general health, technology skills, leisure interests, home and community environment, student and family goals, and student interests, no instruments are specified.

Index of Instruments by Age Group

Finally, the instruments are indexed according to age group. Four age groups were created to best accommodate the instruments cited. First, there are the instruments for infants, which span birth to one year, eleven months. Second, there are the instruments for preschool-age children, which cover two years to four years, eleven

months. Third are the instruments for elementary-school-age students, which span five years to eleven years, eleven months. Finally, there are the instruments for adolescents and beyond, defined as twelve years and older. The instruments are then divided further according to the areas outlined in the second index.

Examples of how to use the Compendium

- If you want to know if a particular instrument is used to assess students with visual impairment, consult the first index, which lists the instruments alphabetically.
- If you want to know what Motor Development instruments are used to assess students with visual impairment, then consult the fourth page of the second index, which lists all Motor Development instruments.
- If you want to know what Orientation and Mobility instruments are available for elementary-school-age students, then go to the third index. Consult the third part, which lists instruments for elementary-school-age students, then turn to the third page, which lists the Orientation and Mobility instruments for this age group.