Gifted Education 103: Assessment

Identifying students for services can seem like a whirlwind of scores and recommendations. Knowing a few key terms and how they relate to each other can help you make more sense of it.

**Raw Score**
The number of items answered correctly on a test. When you tell a student that he/she answered 10 questions correctly out of 15 quiz questions, that is a raw score.

**Scale Score**
For standardized tests, raw scores are statistically adjusted and converted onto a common scale to account for differences in different forms of the same test. In some cases, raw scores are converted into scale scores that represent different forms of the same test, in order to make the scores more comparable. These scale scores allow us to see how students performed compared to others in the same grade level.

**Percentile Rank**
Explains how well a student scored on a test compared to other students. A student who scores in the 50th percentile has a score that is higher than 50% of the other students' scores. Talented students tend to score at the 95th percentile or above when compared to their own grade group. In other words, they score higher than 95% of the other students in their grade.

**Normative Group**
Before a standardized test is used in the general population, it is first given to a large group of representative students, in order to determine how we might expect students in general to perform on the test. This group is called the “normative” or “comparison” group. Later, when a student is tested, his/her scores can be compared to those in the normative group. The student's performance might be average, above average, or below average when compared to that normative group.

**Extra Credit!**
*A Nation Empowered: Evidence Trumps the Excuses Holding Back America’s Brightest Students* provides the latest research and practical information about academic acceleration for highly capable students. Download it for free at nationempowered.org!

---

**Identification and Placement**

**IQ Test**
A standardized test of general reasoning that assesses a student’s competence in multiple areas, such as an IQ test. Students’ scores are usually compared to others of the same age.

**Achievement Test**
A test that measures what a student has or hasn’t learned; it is usually given to students after completing a course or topic. You may know this as an end-of-course assessment or a post-test.

**Ability Test**
A test used to predict performance in specific areas of interest; sometimes, there are more content-specific measures of abilities, as compared to intelligence tests, which measure a wide variety of abilities.

**Above-level testing**
Giving a test to younger students that was developed for older students. Also known as “out-of-level testing.” High-validity students tend to “max out” or score at the very top of grade-level tests. We use this tool editing effect as a ceiling effect, and we may test students who are likely to have already exceeded this ceiling.

---

**Aptitude test**
A test that is used to predict performance in specific areas of interest. Sometimes, there are more content-specific measures of abilities, as compared to intelligence tests, which measure a wide variety of abilities.