

Interpreting Norms During a Significant Disruption in Education

Disruption in education can occur due to personal factors (e.g., illness, trauma) or environmental factors (e.g., school closure, natural disaster, pandemic). To evaluate the educational impact of the disrupting event, consider the examinee’s level of cognitive functioning and/or academic achievement before and after the event, the length of the disruption, the quality of education received during the disruption, and any supplemental instruction the student has received since then.

If the functional and educational impact of the disrupting event appears to be significant, the following guidelines are suggested:

- Interpret both grade-based and age-based norms;
- When interpreting grade-based norms, estimate the impact of the loss of curriculum exposure by comparing the examinee’s grade-based scores to grade-based scores from an earlier trimester or grade level (the comparison grade level will depend on the degree of educational impact); and
- When reporting age-based norms, consider whether the norms include age-matched peers in grades above or below the examinee’s grade level.

Clinical judgment is needed to decide whether to use grade-based and/or age-based norms and to interpret the results according to the examinee’s overall academic performance and educational history. In some cases, neither grade-based nor age-based norms provide an ideal reference group based on the examinee’s unique demographic characteristics or educational background. In these circumstances, clinical judgment is required, and the best decision may be to interpret both types of scores according to the guidelines provided here. Perhaps most importantly, use confidence intervals to describe the examinee’s academic skill level as an estimated range. In some cases, a more accurate estimation of the examinee’s skill level may be at the upper- or lower-end of the confidence interval based on the factors described in this section.

Guidance for Using Grade-Based and/or Age-Based Norms

Use Grade-Based Norms	Use Both Grade-Based and Age-Based Norms	Use Age-Based Norms
To obtain certain WJ IV composite scores when an examinee’s age is out of level (age-based norms are not provided)	For examinees in Grades K-1 in a state with relatively early (July-August) or late (October-January) cut offs for kindergarten entry	For examinees of any age when comparing WJ IV results with age-based (e.g., cognitive ability, language) test results
For an evaluation that focuses on curriculum-based skills	For examinees who are young or old for grade (e.g., held back one or more grades or received advanced grade placement)	For adolescents who have graduated from high school with no college and adults ages 18-50 whom have no college education (situations where grade-based norms and college-based norms are not applicable)
	For examinees who experienced a significant educational disruption	