

Determining Eligibility when Standard Scores Cannot be Reported

Legal Requirements

[34 C.F.R. § 300.304 \(Part B\)](#)

[34 C.F.R. § 303.321 \(Part C\)](#)

[Q&A: Evaluation Due Process Requirements for English Learner Students](#)

Standardized Tools

There are two primary reasons you cannot report scores following administration of a norm-referenced, standardized tool:

- 1) **The tool was not administered in the standardized manner.** Examples would include, but are not limited to: use of an interpreter, repeating test items more frequently than permitted, re-wording the test “script,” [dynamic assessment](#) (i.e. test, teach, retest), etc.
- 2) **The child does not match the normed population represented in the technical manual.** This could include a child exposed to other languages/dialects, a child with a sensory loss, or a child from a different cultural background.

The most important consideration when using any norm-referenced evaluation tool is to recognize its limitations and possible cultural bias. These tools can be used as part of information gathering with children who are not represented in the normed population by using an interpreter or a bilingual examiner to administer the items. However, if the tool is administered using an interpreter or if standardized administration procedures are otherwise modified to meet the cultural or linguistic needs of a student, the standard scores are not reportable. Evaluators can instead write about the child's knowledge and skills by describing their performance in each area tested. Specifically, when reporting the data gathered using a norm-referenced tool, the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) team should compare and contrast the results with other sources of information described in the “During Evaluation” section below.

Further, the team should:

1. Describe each task the child completed in each sub-domain of the tool. Specify at which level the items became difficult.
2. Describe HOW the child completed each item. Specifically, what supports or prompts were offered? Provide information on the quality of the child's performance. Describe their attention to the task? Did they appear to understand what was being asked?

3. Explain how specific items on the tool may have presented a cultural bias. For example in an adaptive section, the child may specifically need to use a fork to feed themselves, but if the child is from a family that primarily uses other types of utensils (e.g. chopsticks, fingers) the child may not be able to achieve a score for that item. Describe these types of items in the report.
4. Describe the factors that may have impacted the child's performance during testing, including information on the child's comfort level, novelty with toys or items, and presence of unfamiliar adults. If an interpreter was present, describe if the child's engagement with the interpreter was impacted by other adults in the room.

The team can also include why the scores were not reported by stating something like:

The standards and procedures (standardized, norm-referenced scores) used with the majority of children were not used with this child, as the instruments were not normed on (MODIFY AS APPROPRIATE) bilingual children who speak languages other than English. Therefore, norm-referenced scores are not considered valid for this child. The objective data used to conclude that this child has a disability and is in need of specialized instruction included: (MODIFY AS APPROPRIATE) parent comments, general education teacher comments, developmental data, observation of the child in the home/school setting, the child's responses to items from standardized tools used with young children, interpreter observations, and comparison of their skill development with that of siblings (or peers from the same culture).

During Evaluation

- Testing may take several visits. It can be helpful to observe the child in more than one setting: in the home, at preschool, playing in the park, etc. [Play-based \(authentic\)](#) and [dynamic assessment](#) procedures are sources of data that can be used, along with other data sources, to help the team determine whether a child is demonstrating a difference rather than a disability.
- Obtain parent opinion. After completing any observations or evaluation procedures, ask the parent whether the child's performance was typical. Inquire whether they notice any differences in their child's development when compared with siblings, cousins, or other children in their community at the same age. What is different? Are they concerned? Are other family members expressing concerns about the child?
- In cases where the services of an interpreter are utilized, ask for their observations. Was the child's speech in their home language easy or difficult to understand? Did they notice anything about the child's language that stood out? Did they have any other observations they wish to share?
- Obtain information on the child from other sources if available (with any required written parental consent): public health nurse, physician, Head Start teacher or preschool teacher, Early Childhood Screening, etc.
- While items from standardized tools can be used as activities to gather information, in most cases, our usual tools are neither designed for nor normed on children who speak other languages or dialects. If items from a standardized tool are given to a child who is not represented in the normed population according to the tool's technical manual, consider how those items must be adapted to eliminate bias.

If	Then
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team has a standardized tool with a normed population that matches the child being evaluated; and Has access to a qualified administrator who speaks the child's language <p>(Note: The technical manual of the tool determines who is a qualified administrator.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer the tool in the standardized manner and report standard scores.

If	Then
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The normed population of the tool does not match the child being evaluated; or The tool is not administered in a standardized manner (examples would include, but are not limited to: use of interpretation, repeating test items more frequently than permitted, re-wording the test "script," dynamic assessment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team may still administer the tool as a source of data, summarizing the child's performance as guided above. Do not report standard scores. Add a statement about why scores were not reported. (See p. 2) Make a statement about whether or not the information gathered from the tool is valid based on the other information that is collected and documented in the report. See Questions 7 and 8 in Q&A: Evaluation Due Process Requirements for English Learner Students for additional guidance regarding documentation of eligibility criteria.