



# WJ Perspectives



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## Responding to School Psychology Practice Needs: The WJ IV ECAD and WIIP

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Two new additions to the **WJ IV™** family of assessments, the **WJ IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development (ECAD®)** and the **WJ IV Interpretation and Instructional Interventions Program (WIIP®)**, offer exciting new possibilities for assessment and intervention. School psychologists who conduct cognitive assessments at the preschool, Kindergarten, and Grade 1 levels may be particularly interested in the design, purposes, and utility of the **ECAD**. Many school psychologists have eagerly anticipated the release of the **WIIP** because it links **WJ IV** test and cluster scores to evidence-based instructional interventions.

In response to professional practice needs expressed by many school psychologists, the **WJ IV** development team has completed work on two new tools that complement, expand, and increase the interpretive value of the **WJ IV**. These tools expand the assessment capabilities and interpretive relevance of the **WJ IV Tests of Cognitive Abilities (WJ IV COG; Schrank, McGrew, & Mather, 2014)**; the **WJ IV Tests of Achievement (WJ IV ACH; Schrank, Mather, & McGrew, 2014)**, or the **WJ IV Tests of Oral Language (WJ IV OL; Schrank, Mather, & McGrew, 2014)** into a complete, evidence-based assessment-to-intervention system for all years of formal schooling.

Many school psychologists who have responsibilities for evaluations at the preschool, Kindergarten, and Grade 1 levels will want to have access to the **ECAD** because the battery is particularly sensitive to—and can identify developmental delays in—important aspects of emerging cognitive abilities and academic skills.

### WJ IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development

A new battery of tests has been added to the **WJ IV** family of assessments that provides a focus on the cognitive and academic development of young children. The **WJ IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development (ECAD; Schrank, McGrew, & Mather, 2015)** is a special-purpose battery of tests, contained within a single easel, designed primarily for use with children of ages 3–7. By creating the **ECAD**, the **WJ IV** authors responded to a need—expressed by many colleagues over the

years—for a dedicated battery of cognitive and early academic skills tests to measure both the emergence and development of the different broad CHC abilities at the preschool and early primary levels. Several insightful school psychologists suggested that CHC theory could be particularly helpful for determining if a young child’s cognitive abilities are developing as expected, and if specific cognitive abilities are delayed, CHC theory would be especially useful for identifying early intervention needs during a critical window of time when targeted educational efforts can yield the greatest gains.

**Scientifically sound, evidence-based cognitive interventions in the WIIP add relevance to an assessment and enhance the school psychologists’ role and function on an evaluation team.**

The ten **ECAD** tests measure emerging cognitive abilities and academic skills in a format that is interesting and attractive to young children. The **ECAD** uses engaging and colorful art to capture a young child’s imagination. Some of the tests are unique to the **ECAD** while others are adapted and alternate forms of tests that are also included in other parts of the **WJ IV** assessment system. Tests that are unique to the **ECAD** include Memory for Names, Verbal Analogies, Visual Closure, and Number Sense.

The **ECAD** is thoughtfully engineered to complement—rather than replicate—the other batteries in the **WJ IV** family of assessments. Although six of the measures are alternate forms of tests that also reside in the other **WJ IV** batteries, the **ECAD** versions have greater item density to capture changes in growth and development in young children. Because the tests are alternate forms, children who are subsequently evaluated with the **WJ IV COG**, **WJ IV OL**, or **WJ IV ACH** are not exposed to the same sets of items. However, the common W-score metric is useful for measuring growth and change in ability from the preschool age to the school years. This is particularly important for skills and abilities that typically increase rapidly during this period of development, such as those measured by the Letter-Word Identification, Rapid Picture Naming, Sentence Repetition, and Writing tests. The **ECAD** Sound Blending and Picture Vocabulary tests also have different items from, and increased item density when compared to their corresponding **WJ IV OL** tests.

The **ECAD** is particularly useful for identifying cognitive developmental delay and the provision of non-categorical individual education plans for young children. IDEA (2004) requires public schools to provide screening and comprehensive assessment for developmental delay for children beginning at age 3. When cognitive development is an area of referral concern, school psychologists may be called upon to provide an appropriate assessment to identify needs so that an individual education plan can be put in place to increase the trajectory of ability and skill development.

## **WJ IV Interpretation and Instructional Interventions Program**

Since the publication of the **WJ IV**, many school psychologists have been eagerly awaiting the release of the **WJ IV Interpretation and Instructional Interventions Program (WIIIP**; Schrank & Wendling, 2015). The **WIIIP** is an online program option that helps school psychologists and other members of the evaluation team interpret the results of the **WJ IV** and links test and cluster scores from any of the **Woodcock-Johnson® IV** (Schrank, McGrew, & Mather, 2014a) batteries to associated instructional interventions. In addition, a number of qualitative checklists provide context to an individual's **WJ IV** scores that make an evaluation with the **WJ IV** more comprehensive.

**The WJ IV family of assessments is the most comprehensive and contemporary evaluation-interpretation-intervention system available.**

Without a doubt, however, the most exciting benefit of the **WIIIP** is the link to evidence-based interventions, formative interventions, relevant suggestions, and accommodations that can be used to individualize a student's educational plan, teach strategies for learning, and improve prospects for successful outcomes. Over the past decades, cognitive neuroscience research has yielded hundreds of interventions for deficits in reading, mathematics, written language, and oral language development.

What is particularly intriguing for many school psychologists is that the **WIIIP** links **WJ IV COG** results to dozens of evidence-based interventions, recommendations, or accommodations that can help teams address limitations identified from tests that measure specific cognitive abilities. Although many individuals develop cognitive abilities through incidental learning, for some students, specific types of knowledge, reasoning, or even processing skills may need to be explicitly modeled, taught, and practiced in an educational setting.

For example, the deceptively simple mnemonic "repeat to remember" is actually a memory strategy that is firmly rooted in cognitive neuroscience. When effectively implemented, the oral-repetition process directs the student's working memory to the word or name to be learned. Repeating a new vocabulary word results in effortful, focused attention on the word during the storage phase of learning so that the consolidation process

is more likely to encode a semantic memory (Medina, 2008). Because teachers and parents often look to school psychologists to provide sound neuro-scientific guidance when specific cognitive limitations are identified, linking the results of cognitive assessment to instructional strategies, learning objectives, and intervention plans makes **WJ IV** cognitive assessment more relevant than ever before.

## **Better Together: The WJ IV Family of Assessments**

Together, the **WJ IV** batteries and tools form a comprehensive, theoretically based contemporary assessment, interpretation, and intervention system that school psychologists can use from the preschool level and throughout the years of formal education. The **ECAD** is co-normed with the **WJ IV COG**, **WJ IV ACH**, and **WJ IV OL** batteries and shares the common CHC interpretive model. The **ECAD**, however, is a dedicated, single easel/single test record selection of the most appropriate tests for determining if cognitive and academic abilities are developing as expected.

The **WIIIP** is a value-added complement to the **WJ IV** family of assessments. The **WIIIP** increases the relevance of a **WJ IV** assessment for professional practice with evidence-based interventions and practical suggestions for the educational program of a student—recommendations that may not have surfaced if the **WJ IV** was not used. The **WIIIP** authors have been sourcing evidence-based instructional interventions to link to the **WJ IV COG**, **WJ IV ACH**, and **WJ IV OL** for several years; those are available now in the **WIIIP**. Evidence-based interventions will be linked to the **ECAD** tests and clusters soon.

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