



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

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September 25, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Directors, Exceptional Children Programs
Directors, Charter Schools

FROM: Mary N. Watson, Director *MNW*
Exceptional Children Division

RE: Dynamic Assessment as a Component of Evaluations for Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and/or Speech-Language Services

The Exceptional Children Division continues to offer guidance to public school systems and charter schools in the implementation of policies to serve students with disabilities. This includes guidance on specific evaluative practices and their use in determining a student's eligibility for special education, developing student goals, and making decisions on appropriate supports and services. This memorandum offers such guidance on the practice of **dynamic assessment** and its legitimate role in the evaluation processes used by occupational therapists, physical therapists, and/or speech-language pathologists. For specific reference within speech-language evaluations, please see NC 1500-2.11(16) of *Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities*.

Dynamic assessment is one possible assessment instrument used by school-based therapists as part of the evaluation process. This type of assessment, among others, may be conducted when it is suspected that a student may have a disability and may require special education. It may also be appropriate for determining whether a student requires one or more related service(s). This approach to evaluation can include, for example, interaction and observation of the student's progress in response to trial intervention (test-teach-test-teach) and environmental modifications within the evaluation timeline. The purpose of a dynamic assessment approach is to inform the IEP Team in its determination of:

- a student's current functioning levels in response to concerns identified in the referral process;
- specific student needs for success in the general curriculum;
- goals for improved functioning, if necessary;
- the amount and frequency of services required for a student to meet these goals; and
- the predicted ability of the student to successfully respond to these services.

While dynamic assessment involves trial interventions from the school-based therapist, it is to be implemented in the context of an evaluation, is time-limited, and is not considered special education. Students should be observed in the natural context, assessed individually, or assessed in small "assessment groups," where the purpose is focused on data collection. It should be made clear to parents in writing on the permission to evaluate that dynamic assessment will be used as one of the assessment instruments.

EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN DIVISION

Mary N. Watson, *Director* | mwatson@dpi.state.nc.us

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Please note that dynamic assessment, as referenced in this memorandum, is not to be confused with the role of the school-based therapists in Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI) efforts. This guidance refers solely to the official evaluation process.

More information on dynamic assessment is available from:

- Perry Flynn, NC DPI Speech-Language Pathology Consultant, pfflynn@uncg.edu or 336/256-2005;
- Lauren Holahan, NC DPI Occupational Therapy Consultant, lauren_holahan@med.unc.edu or 919/843-4466; and
- Laurie Ray, NC DPI Physical Therapy Consultant, laurie_ray@med.unc.edu or 919/636-1827.

MNW/tw/iw/pf