Formal Testing: Tips

Considerations within Selection of Cognitive Assessments

**Validity and testability** – ensuring the assessment is the most valid

Choose instruments that…
- Provide a full range of Standard Scores with consideration of the Floor – seek assessments that go below 50
- Measure both verbal and nonverbal skills with representation of both skills individually – avoid presentation of only full scale scores or presentation of scores that collapse across skills
- Provide an overall index of ability with relatively current norms

Maximizing the Validity of Assessments & Scores

- Ensure test scores are indicators of current ability rather than experience with test-taking
  - Test taking is a social skill that must be taught – sitting, turn taking (give and take, accept and relinquish), attending, work then break
  - Use strategies the student utilizes within the classroom and other settings (e.g., visual schedules, visual supports)
  - Test in multiple short sessions
  - Begin with appealing material the student will enjoy or be able to complete
  - Embed reinforcement within the test-taking session
    - Establish a work-reward pattern
    - Reinforce attempts and test-taking behaviors
  - Alternate verbal and nonverbal tasks
  - Alternate harder tasks and items with easier tasks and items (including manipulatives)
  - Let the child set the pace and follow the child – take notes to inform observations
  - Be persistent but don't press failures more than acknowledging successes with behaviors, test-taking skills, or performance when applicable
  - End on a good note prior to the student becoming exhausted or overwhelmed

- Prepare yourself and the environment
  - Select a calm, quiet, distraction-free location
  - Utilize furniture that fits the child well
  - Ensure materials and procedures are well organized and structured
  - Only have necessary materials within the testing environment
  - Know the test very well and be comfortable taking notes to inform additional observations
  - Do not make the student wait – have materials ready or extra supplies if you foresee the need for time to make notes, transition, or get additional materials