

Assessment:

Assessment is the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and communicating information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes". However it is important to note that these five activities are not linear and that when assessing in the classroom a teacher may not use all five activities at any one time.

Assessment should be a natural part of teaching and learning and should support a teacher in building a picture of a child's progress and/or achievement in learning across the Primary School Curriculum. This picture helps the teacher to identify, celebrate and build on the child's current learning, and provide him/her with appropriate support to enhance future learning. [Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools](#) by the NCCA provides very useful information in relation to a variety of assessment methods. One of these methods is Standardised Testing which we will focus on in this tutorial.

Standardised testing:

The principal purpose of standardised tests is to provide Irish primary school teachers with accurate information on the reading and mathematical levels of children in their classes to inform teaching and learning. It is worth noting that standardised tests measure *achievement* as opposed to *ability*. In addition to measuring achievement, the purposes which standardised tests currently serve in Irish schools include identifying pupils with learning difficulties at the earliest possible stage so that appropriate support and intervention can be put in place, in the form of in-class support and/or supplementary teaching. Equally standardised tests can be used help children with exceptionally high scores by ensuring that appropriate learning experiences are provided for them.

Interpreting standardised test results

Standardised test results may be interpreted in different ways and at different levels - Individual pupils results/tests could be analysed, tests can be examined from a whole class perspective and both of these analyses could then be utilised to feed into the building of a whole school picture.

This whole-school picture allows us to identify trends, emerging patterns or whole school strengths and areas of weakness. This 'big picture' will inevitably prove invaluable when used as a basis for whole school planning in maths and literacy.

Using Excel to support test result analysis

Excel is a simple tool that can be used to compile whole school results in either maths or literacy and support a school in analysing standardised test results. Such analysis of test results can benefit whole school practice.

In this excel template it is assumed that standardised tests are administered in every class from 1st to 6th. On completion of scoring by individual class teachers, each teacher then identifies the total number of children who have performed within each of the percentile bands and adds the figures to the relevant cells in the table (columns B-G).

St. Benedict's N.S. - Test Results Date: November 2009									
	At or below 2nd PR	3rd to 16th PR	17th to 50th PR	51st to 84th PR	85th to 98th PR	Above 98th PR	Total	16th or Below	85th or Above
1st Class	3	5	10	14	2	0	34	23.5%	5.9%
2nd Class	2						2	100.0%	0.0%
3rd Class							0	0.0%	0.0%
4th Class							0	0.0%	0.0%
5th Class							0	0.0%	0.0%
6th Class							0	0.0%	0.0%
Total	5	5	10	14	2	0	36	27.8%	5.6%
Percentage	13.9%	13.9%	27.8%	38.9%	5.6%	0.0%			

The choice of bands relates to some of the purposes for which the test results may be used and can provide a useful reference point for school and classroom planning. For example, pupils in the 3-16th percentile band are likely to be considered in many schools for supplementary teaching. While test results are not the only criterion which should be used, they can be a useful guide when decisions have to be made about which pupils should get priority. Pupils in the lower half of the next band (16-50) might be the focus of in-class support, or even learning support, where the school had the resources available to provide such support. Pupils in the average range are those from the 26-75 band. At the higher end of the spectrum, consideration would need to be given to providing an appropriate challenge to pupils whose achievement is in the high achieving bands.

Analysing your school's results visually

Schools have found it very useful to represent their school profile in a visual way. Click on the tabs at the bottom of the page to see your school's results in a variety of ways:

Total Num of Pupils	10	10	14	2					
Percentage	27.8%	27.8%	38.9%	5.6%					

ResultData NormalDistributionComparison Bar_NormDistComparison PercentileBandsPercentage PieChart_4Bands TotalPupils ClassComparison

- By clicking on the first and second tabs your school's scores are automatically compared against the normal distribution or bell curve so you can see where they fall in relation to other schools at a glance.

- By clicking on the third tab we see the results from the table represented as a bar chart showing the percentages of children in the school who perform at each of the percentile rankings listed.
- Continue clicking on the tabs and you will be able to view the results as a pie chart, total number of children performing at each of the percentile rankings included, and finally class results can be compared with each other.

Interrogating the results:

The following questions might prove useful as a basis for discussion and analysis of the charts:

- What would be the purpose of looking at whole school results in this way?
- Which band of children could be of most concern?
- How do our school results compare with the bell curve of normal distribution?
- Should we have more children scoring at the top percentile band?
- How could this information further the development of whole school planning and implementation of Literacy?

By representing whole school results in this manner on an annual basis, trends, patterns, progress or perhaps lack of progress will be identified and appropriate intervention at whole school level can be put in place as a remediation measure.