



Should I compare grade-equivalent scores from more than one reading test?

No. Much has been written about the problems with grade equivalents and common misconceptions about their use (e.g., AERA/APA/NCME, 1985; Airasian, 1994; Miller, Linn, & Gronlund, 2009; Stiggins, 1997). In 1991, The International Reading Association (IRA) crafted a resolution about the misuse of grade equivalents and stated that it “strongly advocates that those who administer standardized reading tests abandon the practice of using grade equivalents to report performance of either individuals or groups of test takers...” (IRA, 1991). MetaMetrics® has summarized the concerns about grade equivalents in the paper entitled [“The Hippocratic Oath and Grade Equivalents.”](#)

Grade equivalents are based on norming information from the student sample who took the test as part of the norming group. These student samples (the norming group) vary from test publisher to test publisher, so results cannot be assumed to be equivalent. The student scores are not linked back to a common scale through special studies using the same students. Each grade-equivalent study only reflects the characteristics of that unique norming group.

For example, imagine that State A and State B decide to report scores on their reading tests on a scale that ranges from 100 to 200. Both states also decide to set the 150 score point at the level achieved by students at the 50th percentile in their grade. Both state tests would report the score 150, but the actual reading ability represented by the score may be very different because the reading ability of the students in each state whose test scores were used to determine the percentile ranks may be different. It would be misleading to assume that a student who receives a score of 150 on State Test A has the same reading ability as a student who receives a score of 150 on State Test B. All we know for sure is that both students are at the 50th percentile of the norming group used to develop the scale for the test. This same situation can be observed when grade equivalents are used to report the results from two independent tests.

AERA/APA/NCME Joint Committee. (1985). Standards for educational and psychological testing. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Association News: International Reading Association. (1981). *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 14 (9), 558.

Airasian, P. W. (1994). *Classroom assessment* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Miller, M., Linn, R., & Gronlund, N. (2009). *Measurement and assessment in teaching* (10th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.

Stiggins, R. J. (2009). *Student-centered classroom assessment* (Second Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill, an imprint of Prentice Hall.

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