



WJ Perspectives



Fredrick A. Schrank,
Ph.D., ABPP

Early Identification Leads to Early Intervention with the WJ IV ECAD and WIIP

Fredrick A. Schrank, Ph.D., ABPP

The **WJ IV™** suite of assessments includes a dedicated battery of early development tests that identify the emergence of foundational cognitive abilities and skills (the **WJ IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development [WJ IV ECAD®]**; Schrank, McGrew, & Mather, 2015) that is aligned with cognitive developmental supports and interventions (the **WJ IV Interpretation and Instructional Interventions Program™ [WIIP®]**; Schrank & Wendling, 2015). **ECAD** helps school psychologists identify learning needs during a critical window of development when targeted interventions can reduce or even eliminate cognitive delay. **WIIP** aligns needs identified by **ECAD** with individualized educational plans, instructional activities, and strategies. School psychologists who have responsibilities at the Pre-K through Grade 1 levels will want to learn more about **ECAD** and **WIIP**.

School psychologists who have responsibilities at the preschool and K–1 levels advised the **WJ IV** authors of a need for a dedicated, age-appropriate assessment battery that could be directly translated into targeted instructional practices and specialized interventions. In response, **ECAD** was created to help identify early learning needs or delays in areas of cognitive development. When used in conjunction with **WIIP**, **ECAD** helps school psychologists align any delays or needs identified among areas of cognition and emergent school-readiness skills with developmental interventions and evidence-based instructional programming that helps facilitate transitions to increasingly rigorous educational demands, particularly toward the acquisition of abilities and skills that are required for successful performance in Kindergarten and the early grades.

The WJ IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development (ECAD)

The **WJ IV ECAD** was developed in response to a need for a dedicated, single-easel battery of early cognitive and academic skills tests that measure both the emergence and development of different Cattell-Horn-Carroll (CHC) abilities. CHC theory provides the basis for interpretation of test results and is especially helpful for determining if a child's cognitive abilities

and academic skills are developing as expected. **ECAD** combines an individualized, age-appropriate, norm-referenced assessment with a criterion-referenced (authentic) interpretive model to target early learning needs and suggest instructional practices. The stimulus materials are engaging and attractive to young children and administering the entire **ECAD** can be completed in less than an hour. There is only one test easel and only one test record. Some of the tests are unique to **ECAD** while others are adapted and alternate forms of tests included in other parts of the **WJ IV** that have been widely used at the Pre-K through Grade 1 levels. Although designed primarily for children in the 3–7 age range, **ECAD** can also be used with children as young as 30 months or with children aged 8–9 who have, or are suspected of having, a cognitive developmental delay or intellectual disability. One of the reasons **ECAD** is so exciting is that it can be used to identify specific cognitive and academic delays during a critical developmental window of time when targeted interventions can be both easy to implement and highly effective.

An ECAD assessment requires only one hour, one test easel, and one test record.

The WJ IV Interpretation and Instructional Interventions Program (WIIP)

School psychologists with access to **WIIP** will find that interventions are now aligned with results from **ECAD**, making **ECAD** assessment data more meaningful and actionable. **WIIP** aligns developmental deficits with intervention plans that are intended to increase the trajectory of vocabulary knowledge, language development, verbal and figural reasoning ability, phonological awareness and sensitivity, letter and word identification, writing, and the development of number sense. In addition, **WIIP** provides a vehicle for parents and teachers to be part of the assessment process. The **WIIP** Parent's Checklist is a tool to meaningfully engage and empower the parent's role in the child's education. The **WIIP** Teacher's Checklist brings the lens of a classroom teacher to the assessment process. When parents and teachers are a part of the evaluation process,

assessments are more likely to be viewed as inclusive and informative and the prospects for positive outcomes increase.

Many school psychologists have already found *ECAD* to be particularly useful for assessment needs in Kindergarten and Grade 1.

The *WJ IV* authors are very excited about the promise of *ECAD* and *WIIIP* because cognitive and academic developmental delays can be minimized or in some cases even eliminated with early identification, high-quality educational experiences, and interventions. Interventions that target cognitive developmental needs or pre-academic skill deficits can foster learning readiness and enhance the probability of success for a child transitioning to, or struggling with, the demands of Kindergarten or Grade 1.

Improving Early Childhood and K–1 Education with *ECAD* and *WIIIP*

Many school psychologists have already found *ECAD* and *WIIIP* to be particularly useful for evaluation and intervention needs in Kindergarten and Grade 1. Because *ECAD* was developed to assess cognitive and academic abilities in the preschool ages as well, now may be the time for school psychologists to strengthen assessment and intervention services in Pre-K education—a critical window of time when delays become noticeable, measurable, and quantifiable. The recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 specifically ensures that schools can use federal dollars for programs that improve early childhood education. All school districts are encouraged to develop and implement promising practices for improving early childhood education, particularly for students with the greatest needs. School psychologists can be part of a district’s plan for improving preschool educational experiences through an emphasis on early identification of any cognitive and academic developmental delays, particularly when identification of learning needs leads to supplemental, high-quality interventions that increase the trajectory of cognitive and academic skill development.

ESSA, IDEA, *ECAD*, and *WIIIP* are conceptually aligned to identify the learning needs of low-achieving children and suggest targeted, supplemental academic supports and evidence-based interventions.

Use of *ECAD* and *WIIIP* is also consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), which requires public schools to provide screening and comprehensive assessment for any suspected cognitive developmental delay for children beginning at age 3. The ESSA and the IDEA are both aligned in recognizing the importance of early identification of delays so that plans can be put in place to increase the acquisition

of ability or skill development, or, in some cases, eliminate a cognitive or academic delay entirely. *ECAD* early childhood assessment and *WIIIP* interventions can provide a practical and targeted approach for identifying the learning needs of the most disadvantaged students during a critical window of time when a relatively small investment in needs identification and intervention could lessen or eliminate any measured cognitive or developmental gap in performance. Because targeted assistance programs must use instructional strategies based on scientifically sound research and also involve parents in the process, *WIIIP* is particularly helpful. *WIIIP* will help school psychologists design, in consultation with parents and teachers, an instructional program to meet the learning needs of the most disadvantaged children.

Now may be the time for school psychologists to implement an “identify and intervene early” model using *ECAD* and *WIIIP*.

ECAD and *WIIIP* can be a primary resource for a targeted assistance practice model that focuses assessment and intervention services to children who are failing or at risk of failing, particularly the lowest-achieving children. Using *ECAD* and *WIIIP* is arguably one of the least expensive and most innovative methods for improving early learning experiences, particularly for children with the greatest needs. With the assurance of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, now may be the time for school psychologists who have responsibilities at the Pre-K through Grade 1 levels to implement an “identify needs and intervene early” model using *ECAD* and *WIIIP*.

References

- Every Student Succeeds Act, 114 U.S.C. § 1177 et seq. (2015). Retrieved December 29, 2015 from <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-114s1177enr/pdf/BILLS-114s1177enr.pdf>
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq. (2004). Retrieved February 2, 2015 from <http://www.copyright.gov/legislation/p1108-446.pdf>
- Schrank, F. A., McGrew, K. S., & Mather, N. (2015). *Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development*. Itasca, IL: Riverside.
- Schrank, F.A., & Wendling, B. J. (2015). *WJ IV Interpretation and Instructional Interventions Program*. Itasca, IL: Riverside.

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt™, HMH®, Woodcock-Johnson®, WJ IV™, *ECAD*®, *WIIIP*® (WJ IV Interpretation and Instructional Interventions Program™ and Woodcock Interpretation and Instructional Interventions Program™), and Riverside® are trademarks or registered trademarks of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. © Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. All rights reserved. 06/16 MS178088

hmcocom • 800.323.9540