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ABSTRACT

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Research Report No. 30

INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING: INFORMATION COLLECTED BY SCHOOL  
PSYCHOLOGISTS VS. INFORMATION CONSIDERED USEFUL BY TEACHERS

Martha L. Thurlow and James E. Ysseldyke



***Institute for  
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- I. Adequacy of Norm-Referenced Data for Prediction of Success
- II. Computer Simulation Research on the Assessment/Decision-making/Intervention Process
- III. Comparative Research on Children Labeled LD and Children Failing Academically but not Labeled LD
- IV. Surveys on In-the-Field Assessment, Decision Making, and Intervention
- V. Ethological Research on Placement Team Decision Making
- VI. Bias Following Assessment
- VII. Reliability and Validity of Formative Evaluation Procedures
- VIII. Data-Utilization Systems in Instructional Programming

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June, 1980

## Abstract

A nationwide sample of 49 school psychologists and 30 regular education teachers provided information on assessment for the purpose of instructional planning. School psychologists listed the types of information they collected for this purpose and teachers listed the types of information considered useful for this purpose. While some indications of agreement were found between school psychologists and teachers, there were also several inconsistencies in the views of the two groups regarding assessment procedures for instructional planning. The similarities and differences are discussed in light of their implications for psychoeducational assessment for decision making.

Instructional Planning: Information Collected by School  
Psychologists vs Information Considered Useful by Teachers

Interest in the assessment procedures used within schools has grown as a result of legal requirements for comprehensive and fair assessment of students. Surveys of school personnel in Illinois (Mardell-Czudnowski, 1980), in Minnesota (Thurlow & Greener, 1980), in Virginia (cf. Ysseldyke, Regan, & Schwartz, 1980), and in Child Service Demonstration Centers across the nation (Thurlow & Ysseldyke, 1979), as well as results of computer simulated decision making (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Regan, & Potter, 1979) and observations of team meetings (Ysseldyke, Mirkin, Thurlow, Poland, & Allen, 1980) confirm that a large number of tests are being used to make decisions about students. Many of the devices are technically inadequate.

Salvia and Ysseldyke (1978) argue that the use of assessment devices should be differentiated in terms of the decision to be made. Yet, in a recent survey of assessment procedures and devices used by personnel in model programs for the learning disabled (CSDCs), Thurlow and Ysseldyke (1979) found that all data sources and nearly every specific assessment device were used for all types of decisions (screening, placement, instructional programming, pupil evaluation, and program evaluation). Much of the information about students that is available to school personnel is collected by school psychologists (Mardell-Dzudnowski, 1980). However, the issue of the usefulness of the information collected by school psychologists and other support personnel for teachers planning instructional interventions has not been addressed.

In contrast, there has been recent research comparing the views of school psychologists and teachers on assessment procedures in other decision

areas. Matusek and Oakland (1979) evaluated the types of information used by psychologists and teachers when making placement decisions about hypothetical students presented in case studies. They found that there was considerable agreement about the kinds of information relevant to making decisions as to which children needed help. Both groups relied on IQ, tested achievement, and classroom performance in making decisions.

Researchers at the Psychological Corporation surveyed teachers who had been part of the norming sample for the Metropolitan Achievement Tests to determine their attitudes toward standardized achievement tests in general. They found that 26 percent felt that such tests were useful, and that only seven percent expressed "real discomfort" toward them (Stetz & Beck, 1979). When they asked the teachers how much they "personally use standardized achievement test results" in their classrooms, nine percent indicated they made "considerable use" and 48 percent indicated they made "some use" of such test results (Beck & Stetz, 1979). When teachers were asked specifically about the usefulness of standardized achievement test results for instructional planning, 52 percent responded that they used the results for this purpose and over 60 percent indicated that the test results were useful for planning instruction for individuals or groups.

These studies thus appear to suggest, as Stetz and Beck (1979) conclude, that the "dire pictures painted by testing opponents [cf. Houts, 1977] have little factual basis except in isolated cases" (p. 14). Yet, despite the positive attitudes expressed by teachers toward "tests," it is not clear that the information provided to them is that which they

would consider most useful in planning instruction for handicapped students.

Thurlow and Greener (1980) conducted a pilot study on this question. The results of their survey suggested that LD teachers and school psychologists agreed to a great extent in their selection of assessment procedures for instructional planning. Both groups listed standardized tests most often, with school psychologists clearly favoring the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Revised (WISC-R), and teachers favoring several tests, including the WISC-R. Both groups also listed information from teachers as useful for instructional planning. However, as Thurlow and Greener (1980) noted, their findings were limited in their generalizability because all subjects were from Minnesota school districts. Further, all teachers were specialists in learning disabilities. The views of regular education teachers should be examined since "they are the individuals responsible for implementing programs for today's mainstreamed handicapped students" (Thurlow & Greener, 1980, p. 12).

The present study used a survey procedure to ascertain the extent to which assessment procedures used by school psychologists across the nation agree with the assessment procedures considered useful by teachers across the nation for the purpose of instructional planning.

### Method

#### Subjects

Subjects were 53 school psychologists and 34 regular education teachers who responded to a mailed survey form. The original school psychologist

pool was developed by randomly selecting the names of 75 members of the National Association for School Psychologists (NASP). The responding school psychologists (70.7% of the pool) were from 24 different states. The original teacher pool was constructed by randomly selecting the names of 75 elementary schools in a directory of U.S. schools. The responding teachers (45.3% of the pool) were from 27 different states.

### Materials

Survey forms were developed to determine the 10 assessment procedures used by school psychologists and considered most useful by teachers for planning instructional programs for handicapped students. School psychologists were instructed to list "the 10 devices or data collection procedures that you use most often in assessments conducted to plan instructional programs for handicapped students." Teachers were instructed to list "the 10 devices or data collection procedures that you find to be most useful for planning instructional programs for handicapped students." All subjects were instructed to think about "last year" when developing their lists, to be as specific as possible, and to list the procedures in order, starting with the one of greatest value. Copies of the survey forms are included in Appendix A.

### Procedure

All survey forms were mailed with a cover letter and stamped return envelope. School psychologist surveys were sent directly to the identified members of NASP. Because a nationwide list of elementary school teachers was not available, teacher surveys were mailed with a cover letter to the principals of the 75 randomly selected elementary schools. The cover letter asked the principal to randomly select one elementary teacher from

the school and give the survey to that teacher. The number of forms actually passed on to teachers is unknown. After eight weeks, a follow-up letter and survey form were sent to each subject who had not returned the first form.

### Results

The survey forms returned by four school psychologists and four teachers were not included in the analyses of results. Three school psychologist forms were returned with notes that the individuals were no longer involved in conducting assessments, while one form was returned blank without explanation. Two teacher forms were returned with notes that their schools did not have programs for handicapped students, one with a note that the school "had no data collection procedures used," and one was returned blank. As a result, the analyses were conducted on data provided by 49 school psychologists and 30 regular education teachers.

Although the survey forms provided spaces for 10 assessment procedures to be listed, not all subjects listed 10. The number of procedures listed ranged from five to 10 ( $\bar{X} = 9.45$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ) for school psychologists, and two to 10 ( $\bar{X} = 8.20$ ,  $SD = 2.17$ ) for teachers. The difference in the mean numbers listed was statistically significant ( $t(77) = 3.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Table 1 presents an overall categorized summary of the assessment procedures listed by school psychologists and teachers. While the percentages of school psychologists and teachers listing a particular procedure category were very similar in some cases (behavioral observations, history/record review, medical information), they were very different in other cases (standardized tests, informal measures, others' input, other). Tests for the significance of differences between proportions (Ferguson, 1966)

conducted on the 10 categories in Table 1 revealed that significant differences existed between the proportions of school psychologists and teachers listing standardized tests ( $\underline{z} = 8.66, p < .01$ ), informal measures ( $\underline{z} = 7.75, p < .01$ ), others' input ( $\underline{z} = 3.60, p < .01$ ), and other ( $\underline{z} = 3.35, p < .01$ ). A greater proportion of school psychologists than teachers listed standardized tests; the other significant differences were due to a greater proportion of teachers listing the category.

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 Insert Table 1 about here  
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While a significantly greater proportion of school psychologists than teachers listed standardized tests, both groups mentioned this category most often. Over 70 percent of the procedures listed by school psychologists and over 40 percent of the procedures listed by teachers were standardized tests. Each of the other procedures was listed less than 10 percent of the time by school psychologists, with most listed less than three percent of the time. In contrast, teachers showed greater variability in the extent to which other procedures were mentioned. Informal measures were listed nearly 18 percent of the time and "other" procedures were listed nearly 15 percent of the time. Only three procedures were listed less than three percent of the time.

Table 2 provides information on the procedures listed first by school psychologists and teachers. Only two of the categories showed significant differences in the proportions of school psychologists and teachers listing them. Significantly more school psychologists than teachers listed standardized tests as their first choice ( $\underline{z} = 3.62, p < .01$ ) and significantly more teachers than school psychologists listed informal measures as their first choice ( $\underline{z} = 3.08, p < .01$ ). ~~Still~~, standardized tests were mentioned most frequently by both groups.

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 Insert Table 2 about here  
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The percentage of psychologists listing standardized tests first (73.5%) was very similar to the percentage of times standardized tests were listed overall by school psychologists (73.9%). Behavioral observations and teacher input were the next most frequently listed procedures; yet, both were listed by less than 10 percent of the school psychologists. Again, teachers' first choices showed greater variability, with four procedures (standardized tests, informal measures, teacher input, and other) listed by more than 10 percent of the teachers. The percentage of teachers listing informal measures as the most useful assessment procedure for instructional planning approached the percentage of teachers listing standardized tests. It is noteworthy that several categories were never listed by school psychologists as their first choice (informal measures, parent input, student input, others' input) while only one category was never listed by teachers (medical information).

When listing the assessment procedures used or considered useful for instructional planning, most subjects responded with the names of specific tests rather than indicating the general category of "standardized tests." Out of the 342 standardized test entries of school psychologists, only 16 (4.7%) were listed in general terms. For the 326 entries giving a specific standardized test name, 62 different tests were included. Twenty-nine of these were listed by one individual only.

Table 3 presents the names of those tests listed by more than five school psychologists (approximately 10%). Three tests were listed with greater frequency than any others: WISC-R (83.7%), Bender (71.4%), and

WRAT (69.4%). Three other tests were listed by more than 25 percent of the school psychologists: Stanford-Binet (49.0%), PIAT (32.6%), and Key Math (30.6%).

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 Insert Table 3 about here  
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For the teacher sample, 15 (14.8%) entries of standardized tests were in general terms. Forty-seven different tests were included in the 86 entries giving a specific standardized test name. Thirty of these were listed by one individual only.

Table 4 presents the names of those tests listed by three (10%) or more teachers. No single test was listed with much greater frequency than any others. One test was mentioned by more than 25 percent of the teachers: WISC-R (30.0%). The two tests listed next most frequently were: Key Math (23.3%) and PIAT (16.7%).

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 Insert Table 4 about here  
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Further analysis of the standardized tests listed by 10 percent or more of the school psychologists and teachers (see Table 5) revealed that the tests listed by school psychologists included only one more domain (personality) than did those listed by teachers. The frequency with which other domains were included was quite similar for the two subject groups. Both groups included intelligence measures most often (36.4% and 30.8% for school psychologists and teachers, respectively), followed by perceptual measures (21.8% and 23.1%, respectively) and achievement measures (20.9% and 20.5%, respectively). Teachers included measures

of specific academic areas (math and reading) approximately twice as often as did school psychologists.

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Insert Table 5 about here  
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Table 6 presents the names of those standardized tests listed in the first position on the questionnaire form by more than one school psychologist. These tests were the ones used most often by school psychologists to obtain information for instructional planning. All school psychologists listing standardized tests in the first position (N = 36) gave the names of specific tests; however, four of the tests were listed by one individual only. Clearly the WISC-R, an intelligence measure, was the test most frequently used for instructional planning assessment by those school psychologists listing a standardized test first.

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Insert Table 6 about here  
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In contrast, those teachers who listed standardized tests first (N = 9) did not show consensus in terms of one specific test. Each of the nine teachers listing standardized tests first gave the name of a specific test; however, each one gave the name of a different test. Only one of these (WISC-R) was the same as those listed by the school psychologists. The other tests included two achievement measures, three reading measures, and one measure each of intelligence, language, and a comprehensive measure of cognitive ability, achievement, and interests.

### Discussion

This research was designed to ascertain the extent to which the assessment procedures used by school psychologists to plan instructional interventions for handicapped students are the assessment procedures considered by teachers to be most useful for this purpose. The question is an important one, for it has been proposed that the role of the school psychologist, generally defined, is to work "with teachers to facilitate learning by children" (Ysseldyke, 1978, p. 373), and that this role has not been fulfilled in the past because the data supplied to teachers are not the data those teachers want (cf. also Bennett, 1970):

Teachers want to know specifically what to do for and with children, both academically and behaviorally. Rather than getting specifics, they report that they typically receive generalities couched in impressive arrays of subtest scaled scores, grade equivalents, and psychological jargon. Rather than receiving clear psychoeducational pictures of children and precise statements regarding specific skills which youngsters have and do not have, they receive statements regarding causes of a child's difficulties ranging from unfulfilled needs and unresolved conflicts to specific perceptual-motor, psycholinguistic, and cognitive deficits. (Ysseldyke, 1978, p. 344).

Ysseldyke and Regan (1979) argue that the decision to be made (screening, placement, instructional planning, pupil evaluation, or program evaluation) should dictate the assessment strategies and techniques employed rather than the devices used dictating the strategies and techniques employed.

On the face, the results of the present survey appear to demonstrate considerable agreement between school psychologists and teachers regarding assessment procedures for instructional planning. Both groups list standardized tests most frequently. Both groups mention the WISC-R most frequently. Both groups subsume the same three domains (intelligence,

perceptual, achievement) most frequently in the tests they name. Such evidence might lead one to conclude, as others have (cf. Beck & Stetz, Matussek & Oakland, 1977; Stetz & Beck, 1979) that school psychologists and teachers agree on the kinds of information relevant to reaching educational decisions.

However, the results of the present investigation also reveal several inconsistencies in the views of the two groups. School psychologists listed many more procedures with greater frequency than did teachers. While this difference possibly reflects simply a difference in expertise level of the two groups, it is equally as possible that teachers simply consider fewer types of data to be relevant to instructional planning than do school psychologists. This latter possibility seems especially likely given the increased exposure to assessment data most teachers have had as a result of team meetings and given the finding of the present study that in only a few cases did school psychologists mention a procedure that was not also mentioned by teachers to a lesser extent.

Although both school psychologists and teachers mentioned standardized tests most frequently, the two groups did not do so to the same degree. School psychologists clearly favored standardized tests, almost to the exclusion of all other types of data. This was found, despite the suggestion that such tests are appropriately used for classification decisions, not intervention decisions (Ysseldyke & Regan, 1979). On the other hand, teachers did not favor standardized tests to the exclusion of other types of data. Among those procedures listed first, teachers identified informal measures almost as often as standardized devices, and other data sources such as teacher input and behavioral observations were

not far behind. These types of information are in line with the recommendation of Ysseldyke and Regan (1979) that instructional plans should be based on data about interventions that have, and have not, previously worked with a particular student.

School psychologists not only favored standardized tests, but also agreed to a considerable extent on the set of specific devices they used for instructional planning assessment. The set consisted of three tests - WISC-R, WRAT, and Bender - a combination that has been criticized as the trio of tests used regardless of the decision to be made (Ysseldyke & Mirkin, 1979). These same tests were found by Mardell-Czudnowski (1980) to be the most widely used by school psychologists. Teachers, in contrast, did not favor any test to the extent that the psychologists favored these three. The three tests most frequently mentioned by teachers were the WISC-R, the PIAT, and Key Math. In addition, teachers more often than school psychologists included tests that measured specific academic domains.

The results of the present survey once again confirm that a large number of specific tests are used to make decisions about students, and further that teachers consider a large number of tests to be relevant to their instructional planning needs. Clearly, there are idiosyncratic preferences involved - nearly half (46.8%) of the tests listed by school psychologists and over half (63.8%) of the tests listed by teachers were named by one individual only. Thus, even the finding that both groups listed standardized tests most frequently does not really indicate consensus considering the great variability in the choices within this information domain.

It is noteworthy also that the results of the nationwide survey presented here are not in complete agreement with those of the Minnesota survey conducted by Thurlow and Greener (1980). They found a greater degree of consensus among school psychologists and teachers, with school psychologists including teacher input as a primary procedure nearly as often as teachers, and teachers listing basically the same specific tests as school psychologists. The discrepancy between the national sample and the Minnesota sample points to the need for a broad sampling procedure when collecting descriptive data on the state of the art in psychoeducational assessment. The results of Mardell-Czudnowski (1980), Beck and Stetz (1979), Matusek and Oakland (1979), and Stetz and Beck (1979) can be criticized on this basis.

The data presented here, while indicating differences between the approach taken by school psychologists in conducting assessments for instructional planning and the approach teachers seem to consider most useful for providing information for instructional planning, do not allow evaluative judgments to be made as to which of the two approaches is better. That teachers seem to want more teacher input and observational data than school psychologists provide does not necessarily mean the school psychologists are acting inappropriately when they provide data from standardized tests (although Ysseldyke & Regan, 1979, would suggest that is the case). Systematic research needs to be conducted to compare the benefits to be derived from different approaches to psychoeducational assessment, not just for instructional planning, but for referral, placement, and other decisions as well.

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## Footnote

Appreciation is extended to Jonathan Kronstadt for his assistance in tabulating the data.

Table 1  
 Categories of Assessment Procedures Listed by School  
 Psychologists and Regular Education Teachers<sup>a</sup>

Procedure Category <sup>b</sup>	School Psychologists		Teachers	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Standardized Tests*	342	73.9	101	41.0
Behavioral Observations	22	4.8	12	4.9
Informal Measures*	11	2.4	44	17.9
Teacher Input	15	3.2	14	5.7
Parent Input	9	1.9	8	3.2
Student Input	10	2.2	4	1.6
Others' Input*	5	1.1	16	6.5
History/Record Review	10	2.2	7	2.8
Medical Information	7	1.5	4	1.6
Other* <sup>c</sup>	32	6.9	36	14.6

<sup>a</sup> Percentages were derived by dividing the number of procedures in a category by the total number of procedures listed by psychologists (N = 463) and teachers (N = 246).

<sup>b</sup> An \* following a category name indicates that the proportions of school psychologists and teachers listing the category were significantly different ( $p < .01$ ).

<sup>c</sup> This category includes procedures that could not be classified generally because of their nonspecific nature (e.g., interview, psychological data, evaluation, projectives, maturity, questionnaire).

Table 2  
 Categories of Assessment Procedures Listed First by  
 School Psychologists and Regular Education Teachers<sup>a</sup>

Procedure Category <sup>b</sup>	<u>School Psychologists</u>		<u>Teachers</u>	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Standardized Tests*	36	73.5	9	30.0
Behavioral Observations	4	8.2	3	10.0
Informal Measures*	0	0.0	6	20.0
Teacher Input	3	6.1	4	13.3
Parent Input	0	0.0	1	3.3
Student Input	0	0.0	1	3.3
Others' Input	0	0.0	1	3.3
History/Record Review	2	4.1	1	3.3
Medical Information	1	2.0	0	0.0
Other <sup>c</sup>	3	6.1	4	13.3

<sup>a</sup>Percentages were derived by dividing each entry by the number of school psychologists (N = 49) and teachers (N = 30).

<sup>b</sup>An \* following a category name indicates that the proportions of school psychologists and teachers listing the category were significantly different ( $p < .01$ ).

<sup>c</sup>This category includes procedures that could not be classified because of their nonspecific nature.

Table 3  
Standardized Tests Used for Instructional Planning  
by School Psychologists

Test	Number	Percentage <sup>a</sup>
Beery Devel. Test of Visual-Motor Integration	9	18.4
Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt	35	71.4
Draw-A-Person	6	12.2
House-Tree-Person	9	18.4
Human Figure Drawing	6	12.2
Key Math Diagnostic Arithmetic Test	15	30.6
McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities	10	20.4
Peabody Individual Achievement Tests (PIAT)	16	32.6
Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test	24	49.0
Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS)	6	12.2
Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R)	41	83.7
Wepman Test of Auditory Discrimination	8	16.3
Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)	34	69.4
Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests	11	22.4
WPPSI	6	12.2

<sup>a</sup>Percentages reflect the proportion of the 49 school psychologists mentioning each test. The percentages do not total 100.0 because each school psychologist could list up to 10 tests.

Table 4  
Standardized Tests Considered Useful for Instructional Planning  
by Teachers

Test	Number	Percentage <sup>a</sup>
Beery Devel. Test of Visual-Motor Integration	3	10.0
Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt	3	10.0
Detroit Test of Learning Aptitude	3	10.0
Key Math Diagnostic Arithmetic Test	7	23.3
Peabody Individual Achievement Tests (PIAT)	5	16.7
Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R)	9	30.0
Wepman Test of Auditory Discrimination	3	10.0
Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)	3	10.0
Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests	3	10.0

<sup>a</sup> Percentages reflect the proportion of the 30 teachers mentioning each test. The percentages do not total 100.0 because each teacher could list up to 10 tests.

Table 5  
 Domains of the Specific Tests Listed by School Psychologists  
 and Teachers<sup>a</sup>

Domain	<u>School Psychologists</u>		<u>Teachers</u>	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Achievement	50	20.9	8	20.5
Intelligence	87	36.4	12	30.8
Mathematics	15	6.3	7	17.9
Perceptual	52	21.8	9	23.1
Personality	24	10.0	0	0.0
Reading	11	4.6	3	7.7

<sup>a</sup> Percentages were derived by dividing the number of tests in each domain by the total number of specific tests listed by 10 percent or more of the school psychologists (N = 239) and teachers (N = 39).

Table 6

Specific Standardized Tests Listed First by School Psychologists<sup>a</sup>

Test	Number	Percentage <sup>b</sup>
Key Math Diagnostic Arithmetic Test	2	5.6
Wechsler Intell. Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R)	28	77.8
WPPSI	2	5.6

<sup>a</sup>Table includes only those specific test names listed first by two or more school psychologists.

<sup>b</sup>Percentages were derived by dividing the number of school psychologists listing a test by the number of school psychologists listing a standardized test (N = 36).

Appendix A

Survey Forms

School Psychologist Survey Form

SP ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

Please list below the 10 devices or data collection procedures that you use most often in assessments conducted to plan instructional programs for handicapped students. Please be as specific as possible. It may help to think about last year -- which devices or procedures were used most often. List the devices and procedures in order, starting with the one used most frequently.

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| (1) _____ | (6) _____  |
| (2) _____ | (7) _____  |
| (3) _____ | (8) _____  |
| (4) _____ | (9) _____  |
| (5) _____ | (10) _____ |

Comments:

Teacher Survey Form

ET ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

Please list below the 10 devices or data collection procedures that you find to be most useful for planning instructional programs for handicapped students. Please be as specific as possible. It may help to think about last year -- which devices or procedures were most useful? List the devices and procedures in order, starting with the one considered to be of greatest value.

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