Beyond the Score

What intelligence test scores can and cannot tell us

SS24.P.13b "Summarize concerns regarding the reliability and validity of intelligence test scores and describe the historical use and misuse of intelligence tests."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a sentence about score consistency, circle a sentence about what a test measures, and number three historical uses of intelligence tests in time order.

A Score Is Not the Whole Story

1 A school psychologist gives a student an intelligence test on Monday. On Friday, the student's score changes after a poor night's sleep. A reliable test gives reasonably consistent results when the ability being measured has not changed, so a large shift calls for a closer look. Validity asks a different question: does the test actually measure the ability it claims to measure? A student still learning the test's language may miss verbal questions despite strong reasoning skills.

2 In 1905, Alfred Binet and Théodore Simon developed a test in France to identify children who might need extra help in school. They did not intend a score to be a permanent label of a child's worth. During World War I, the U.S. Army used group intelligence tests to help assign recruits to roles. Some questions depended on English and familiarity with U.S. culture, which made scores less useful as measures of reasoning for some recruits.

3 In the early twentieth century, some officials and advocates treated test scores as proof that certain groups were naturally less capable. They used that claim to defend discrimination, including restrictions on immigration and forced sterilization. Such claims ignored language, schooling, and other influences on scores. Today, a test can provide information, but a single score cannot settle a person's potential or justify unequal treatment. Psychologists examine consistency and what the questions measure before drawing conclusions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the student's change in score raise a reliability concern?

2. Why might verbal questions weaken a score's validity for a student still learning the test's language?

3. How did Binet and Simon's purpose for testing differ from the later misuse described in the passage?

4. Why were some Army test scores weak evidence of recruits' reasoning skills?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A district wants to use one intelligence test score to decide who may enter a music composition program. Write three sentences recommending how the district should check the score's reliability and validity and avoid a historical misuse of testing.

Beyond the Score

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a sentence about score consistency, circle a sentence about what a test measures, and number three historical uses of intelligence tests in time order. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the student's change in score raise a reliability concern?	**The score changed substantially between test days even though the student's ability may not have changed.**
2	Why might verbal questions weaken a score's validity for a student still learning the test's language?	**The questions may measure language knowledge instead of the reasoning skills the test claims to measure.**
3	How did Binet and Simon's purpose for testing differ from the later misuse described in the passage?	**Binet and Simon sought to identify children needing school support. Later, some people used scores to claim groups were naturally less capable and to defend discrimination.**
4	Why were some Army test scores weak evidence of recruits' reasoning skills?	**Some questions required English and knowledge of U.S. culture, which could affect scores apart from reasoning ability.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The district should check whether students get reasonably consistent scores when they take the test again under similar conditions. It should also ask whether the test measures skills needed for music composition rather than unrelated skills. Because scores have been misused to label people and deny opportunities, the district should not use one score to keep a student out.

Accept other accurate explanations of consistency, whether the test measures relevant abilities, and the danger of using a score to deny opportunity. The final response should address all three ideas.