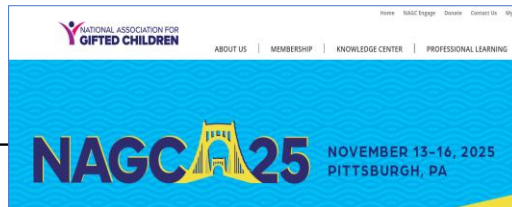


Neurodiversity: Is It Real? Examining the Science Behind Learner Variability

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1

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE GO TO MY WEB PAGES



WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Inequity in Gifted Testing

Recently researchers have estimated that more than 850,000 African-American, Hispanic, and Native American students in K-12 public school today could have been identified for gifted programs but were not. This problem could be addressed by using ability tests that were designed and validated to be equitable for all students.

Achieving Equity

The Naglieri General Ability Tests by Jack A. Naglieri, PhD, Dina M. Shulles, PhD and Kimberly Landow, PhD were explicitly developed to address the need for equitable assessment of gifted students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds so they can receive educational opportunities appropriate for their ability.



NAGLIERI GENERAL ABILITY TESTS: VERBAL, NONVERBAL AND QUANTITATIVE



The Naglieri General Ability Tests: Verbal, Nonverbal and Quantitative provide equitable assessment of students for gifted educational programs.

EQUITY



in this section provides information about equity in the CAS and equity in gifted assessment. CASAT

HANDOUTS



Download PDF handouts of past presentations and related research on the following tests and topics.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION



see Comprehensive examination of executive functions, its measurement, and intervention.

WEBINARS



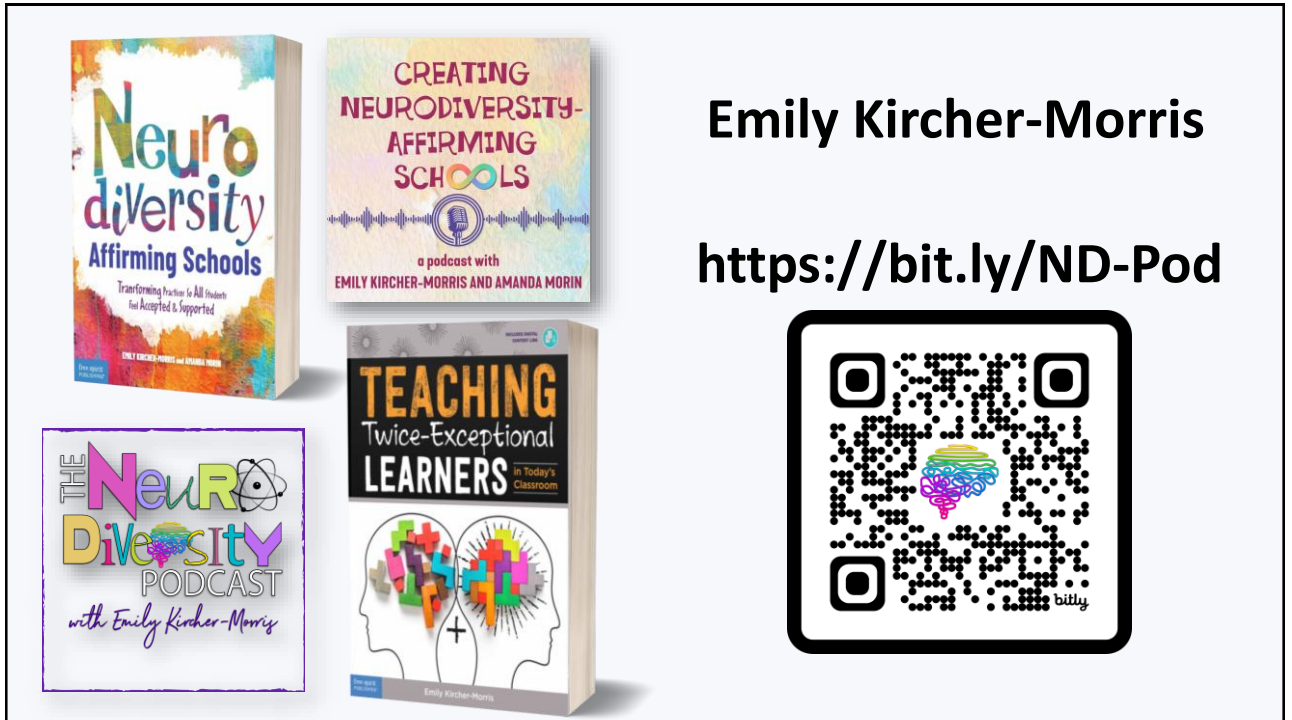
A webinar library that covers a variety of topics such as: EE, Autism Assessment, and SLD. We have created this library to share and learn from each other while staying home and safe.

HELPING CHILDREN LEARN



Helping Children Learn was written to give parents and teachers simple ways to make learning fun and easy for any child. Handouts

2



3

Goals:

- Connect neurodiversity to learner variability and brain-based processing.
- Understand how the PASS Model and CAS2 provide scientific evidence for neurodiversity.
- Apply cognitive profiles to practical strategies for supporting gifted, 2e, ADHD, autistic, and dyslexic learners.

4

“Neurodiversity? That isn’t real.”



5

What People Think Neurodiversity Means...

- A modern word for disorders or labels
- A social movement or identity category
- “Everyone’s brain is just different.”

What the Science Shows It Means...

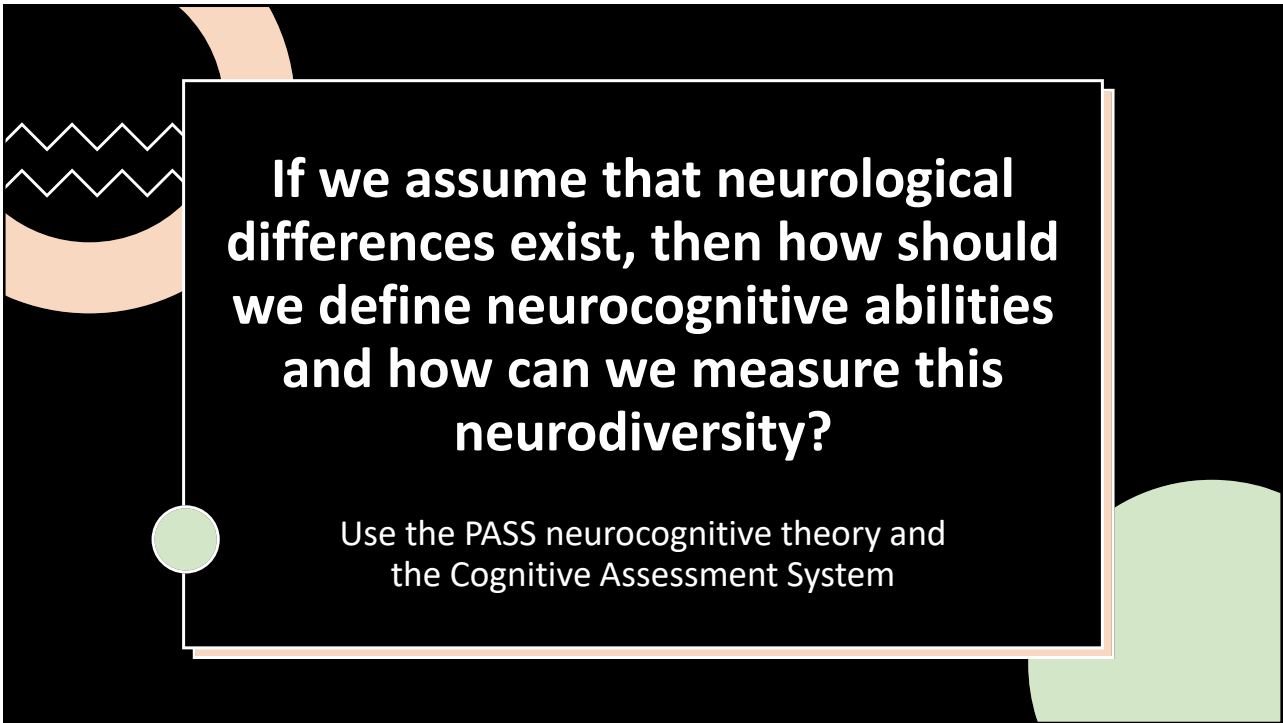
- Cognitive variability is real and quantifiable
- Differences in how the brain plans, attends, sequences, and integrates information
- Neurodiversity = measurable diversity in brain function (not just an opinion or philosophy)

6

Part 1

How Do We Define and Measure Neurocognitive Diversity?

7

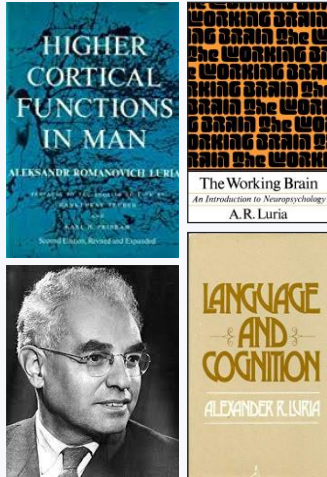


If we assume that neurological differences exist, then how should we define neurocognitive abilities and how can we measure this neurodiversity?

Use the PASS neurocognitive theory and the Cognitive Assessment System

8

PASS Neurocognitive Theory



- **P**lanning = DECIDING HOW TO DO WHAT YOU DECIDE TO DO
- **A**ttention = BEING ALERT AND RESISTING DISTRACTIONS
- **S**imultaneous = GETTING THE BIG PICTURE
- **S**uccessive = FOLLOWING A SEQUENCE

PASS theory can be used to define **NEURODIVERSITY**

These are easy to understand definitions of basic psychological processes that are measured with the Cognitive Assessment System – Second Edition

9

9

PASS Theory and CAS2 Information

PASS Theory of Intelligence and the CAS2

JACK A. NAGLIERI & TULIO M. OTERO



Download Free E-Book

The goal of this e-book is to describe the context in which the PASS Theory of Intelligence was conceived and explain why it guided the construction of the Cognitive Assessment System and its various versions, and the second edition.

Free CAS2 Access
for Univ
Professors



Neurodiversity
Podcast



10

PASS Neurocognitive Theory Based on A. R. Luria's Functional Systems

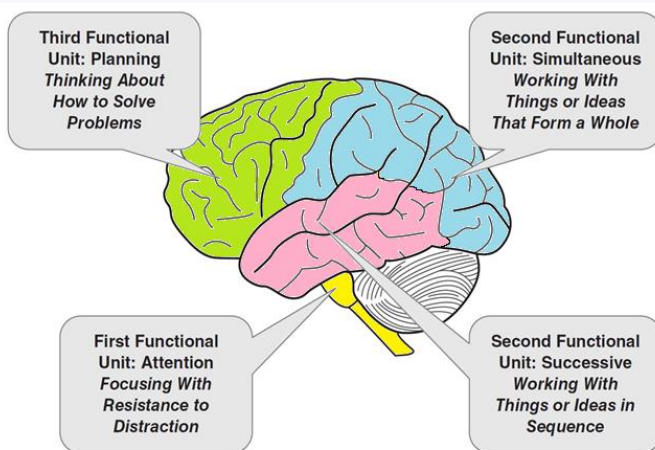


Figure 1.2 Three Functional Units and Associated Brain Structures
From: *Essentials of CAS2 Assessment*. Naglieri & Otero, 2017

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PASS Theory: Planning

- **Planning** is a neurocognitive ability that a person uses to determine, select, and use efficient solutions to problems
 - problem solving
 - developing plans and using strategies
 - retrieval of knowledge
 - impulse control and self-control
 - control of processing
- Planning tests measure Executive Function

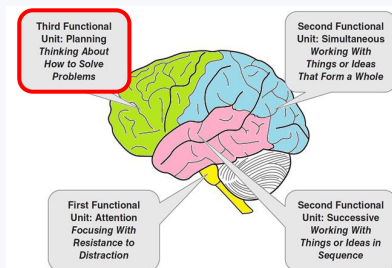


Figure 1.2 Three Functional Units and Associated Brain Structures
From: *Essentials of CAS2 Assessment*. Naglieri & Otero, 2017

A	B	C	D	
X	O	O	X	O

A	B	C	D	A
X	O	O	X	
A	B	C	D	A
X	O	O		
A	B	C	D	A
X	O	O		
A	B	C	D	A
X	O	O		

12

12

PASS Theory: Attention

- Attention is a basic psychological process we use to attend to some stimuli and ignore others
 - Focus our cognitive activity
 - Selective attention
 - Resistance to distraction
 - Listening, as opposed to hearing
- All academic tasks demand attention but some more than others

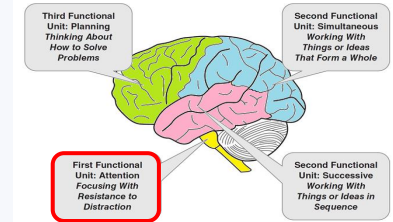


Figure 1.2 Three Functional Units and Associated Brain Structures
From: *Essentials of CAS2 Assessment*. Naglieri & Otero, 2017

RED	RED	BLUE
YELLOW	YELLOW	RED
BLUE	RED	YELLOW
BLUE	BLUE	BLUE

13

13

PASS Theory: Simultaneous

- **Simultaneous** processing is used to integrate stimuli into groups
 - Each piece must be related to the other
 - Stimuli are seen as a whole
- Academics:
 - Reading comprehension
 - geometry
 - math word problems
 - whole language
 - verbal concepts

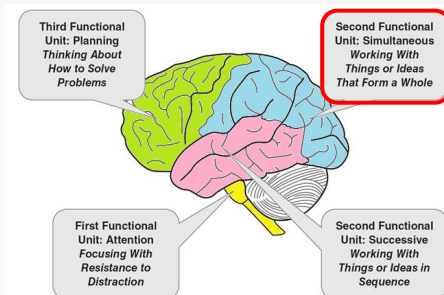
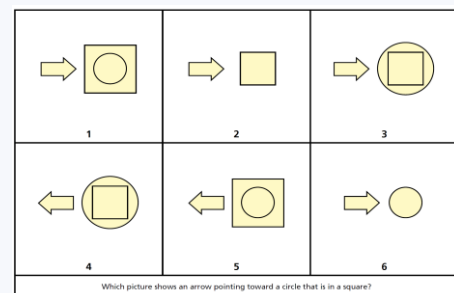


Figure 1.2 Three Functional Units and Associated Brain Structures
From: *Essentials of CAS2 Assessment*. Naglieri & Otero, 2017



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Which intelligence test scores have enough specific variance to be interpreted?

There is a scientific way to answer this question

Bifactor analysis examines each subtest and scales' correlation with the general factor (g) and what each specific ability factor (subtests and scales) tells us **beyond** the Full Scale.

This method reveals whether subtests and scales should be used to understand intellectual strengths and weaknesses.

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Each of these research studies indicate that the Full Scale score is the *only* score to interpret!

1. **WISC-V** (Canivez, et al., 2017)
2. **WAIS-IV** (Canivez, et. A, (2010)
3. **WISC-IV Spanish** (McGill & Canivez, (2017)
4. **Canadian WISC-V** (Watkins, et al., 2017)
5. **Stanford-Binet -Fifth Edition** (Canivez, 2008)
6. **British Ability Scales, 3rd ed** (Cucina & Byle, 2017)
7. **Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test** (Benson, et al., 2020)
8. **Differential Ability Scales-Second Edition** (Canivez & McGill, 2016)
9. **Woodcock-Johnson IV Cognitive** (Dombrowski, McGill & Canivez (2017)
10. **Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children-II** (McGill & Spurgin, 2017)
11. **CHC model** - Carroll's Factor-Analytic Studies (Benson, et al. (2018)

Conclusion: The subtests and scales "have little-to-no interpretive relevance above and beyond that of general intelligence."

Support for 'g' ONLY

CAS is an exception

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Comparing a Child to Themselves (Not Norms) – AKA Ipsative Profiles

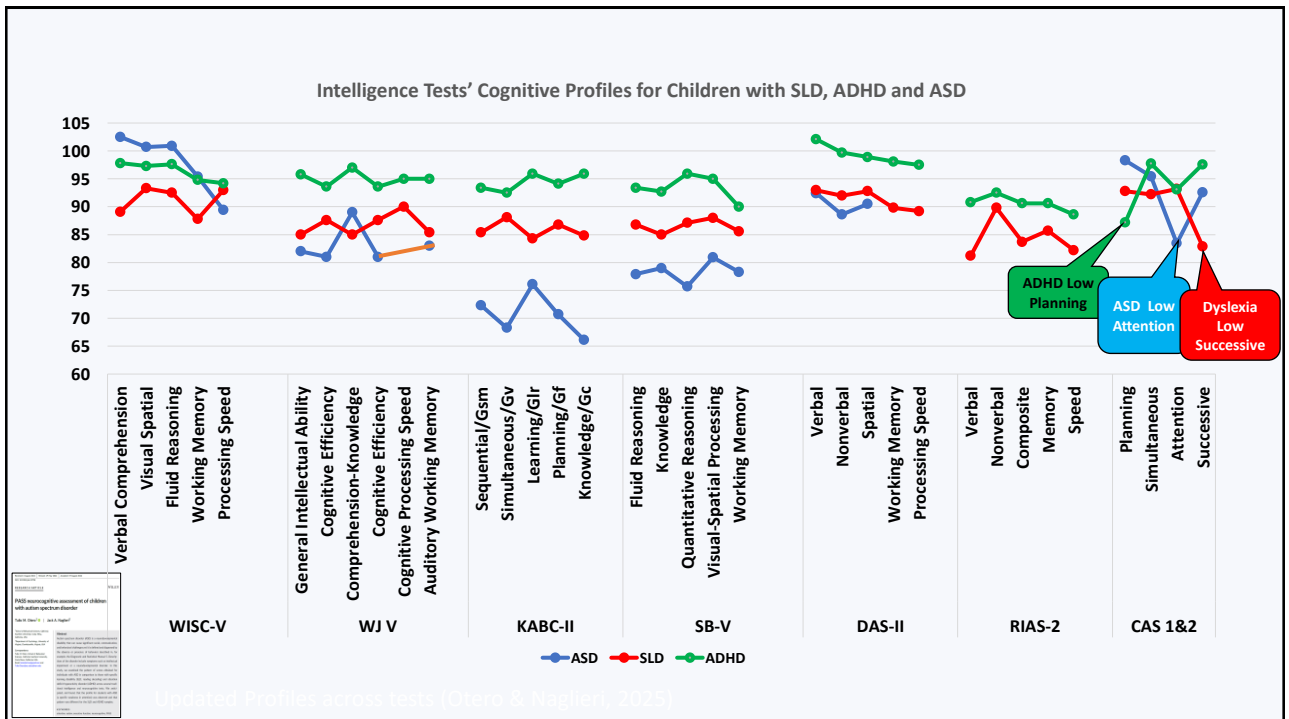
- Traditional assessments compare students to age-based norms (standard scores).
- Ipsative analysis compares a student's *own cognitive strengths and weaknesses against their personal average*.
- Critical for identifying neurodivergent profiles and twice-exceptionality.
- Example: A student with average scores overall, but significantly lower planning compared to their other scores – the *variability* matters.

How smart
are they?



How is their
brain wired?

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Neurodiversity Among the General Population

Percentages of Children in the CAS, CAS2 & CAS2: Brief Normative Samples that have a PASS Score that is a Significant Strength and/or Weakness in Relation to the Child's Average PASS Score.

	Planning	Simultaneous	Attention	Successive
CAS (N = 2,200)	22 %	27 %	22 %	33 %
CAS2 (N = 1,342)	33 %	42 %	39 %	39 %
CAS2: Brief (N = 1,417)	40 %	36 %	31 %	31 %
Overall Average (N = 4,959)	33 %			

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Neurodiversity is Real

- 36% of students in the CAS2 normative sample had significant variability on their Planning, Attention, Simultaneous or Successive scale scores
 - Significant variation in relation to student's average has instructional relevance
 - If the lowest score is <85 then evidence of a disability is found

Differences Between PASS Scale Standard Scores and the Student's Average PASS Score Required for Significant Subtest EXTENDED battery Ages 5-7 Years.

PASS Scales	Standard Score	Difference from PASS Mean of:	Significantly Different (at p = .05) from PASS Mean?	Strength or Weakness
Planning	114	0.0	no	
Simultaneous	129	15.0	yes	Strength
Attention	118	4.0	no	
Successive	95	-19.0	yes	

Note: Strengths and weaknesses are based on having a low PASS score (ipsative comparison at the .05 and .10



Differences Between PASS Scale Standard Scores and the Student's Average PASS Score Required for Significant Subtest EXTENDED battery Ages 5-7 Years.

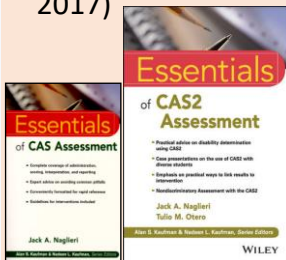
PASS Scales	Standard Score	Difference from PASS Mean of:	Significantly Different (at p = .05) from PASS Mean?	Strength or Weakness
Planning	97	0.0	no	
Simultaneous	112	15.0	yes	Strength
Attention	101	4.0	no	
Successive	78	-19.0	yes	Weakness

Note: Strengths and weaknesses are based on having a low PASS score (ipsative comparison at the .05 and .10 are below 90 (25th percentile).

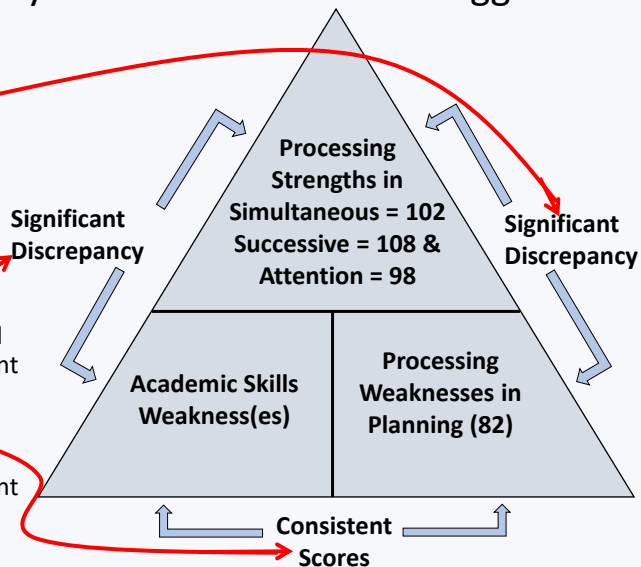
22

Answering the Question: Why students succeed & struggle

- The Discrepancy Consistency Method (DCM) was first introduced in 1999 (most recently in 2017)



- Discrepancy between high and low processing scores
- Discrepancy between high processing and low achievement
- Consistency between low processing and low achievement



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A Study of Gifted Students (Neurocognitive Profiles of Intellectually Gifted Children: A Pilot Study, In press, 2022).

- N = 142
 - Similar numbers of girls and boys in Grade 4, 5 and 6.
 - all native speakers of English
 - from middle to upper-middle socioeconomic families
- Gifted definition:
 - "Giftedness is exceptional potential and/or performance across a wide range of abilities in one or more of the following areas: general intellectual, specific academic, creative thinking, social, musical, artistic and kinesthetic" (Alberta Education, 2012, p. 6).
- Tests given
 - WASI –II (Vocabulary and Matrix Reasoning)
 - Woodcock-Johnson III Broad Reading score from: Letter-Word Identification, Reading Fluency, and Passage Comprehension
 - Cognitive Assessment System (CAS; Naglieri & Das, 1997) to measure PASS neurocognitive processes

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A Study of Gifted Students

- 4% of the students identified as GIFTED have a weakness in PASS 'basic psychology processes' AND an achievement test score below 90.

These students have a specific PASS processing weakness less than 90; suggesting **instructional modifications**

Percentages of Gifted Students with Significant Variability in PASS and Achievement Test Scores (N = 142).

		Planning	Simultaneous	Attention	Successive	PASS
PASS <90	n	4	0	4	4	12
	%	3%	0%	3%	3%	8%
PASS & Skills <90	n	3	0	2	1	6
	%	2%	0%	1%	1%	4%

These students with low PASS scores AND low WJ-III achievement suggests a **Specific Learning Disability**

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Part 2

From Profiles to Practice: What This Looks Like in the Classroom

26

But what if I don't have access to assessment results or diagnosis?

- You already see neurodivergence in your classroom through:
 - Behavior
 - Problem-solving
 - Frustration
 - Communication
 - Creativity
 - Mistakes



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PASS to Practice: Impacts in the Classroom

PASS Process	Common Presentations
Planning	• Trouble starting tasks despite understanding them • Needs prompting or structure to begin work • Rigid thinking or difficulty shifting from original plan • May appear "lazy," "unmotivated," or "oppositional" when overwhelmed • Executive function lag
Attention	• Hyperfocus on interests but inconsistent attention to assigned tasks • Overload or shutdown in noisy, bright, or unpredictable environments • Difficulty shifting between activities or topics • Sensory sensitivities (light, sound, textures) impact focus • Fatigue, burnout, or meltdowns after sustained effort

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PASS to Practice: Impacts in the Classroom

PASS Process	Common Presentations
Simultaneous	• Strong detail focus but misses main idea or overall concept • Struggles to integrate multiple viewpoints or steps into a coherent whole • Literal interpretation of language, sarcasm/hidden meaning missed • Trouble with visual-spatial tasks (maps, geometry, multi-step problems) • Overwhelmed by open-ended or abstract tasks
Successive	• Difficulty processing step-by-step verbal instructions • Struggles with phonics, decoding, spelling, or ordered recall • Mixes up steps in procedures (math, writing, routines) • May rely on scripts instead of spontaneous language • Needs steps broken into clear, concrete chunks

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Low Planning = Difficulty Organizing, Starting, and Strategizing Tasks

Looks Like:	Support With:
Knows what to do but doesn't start; "staring at the paper"	Use visual checklists, timers, or partner start
Forgets materials, loses papers, misses deadlines	Provide external structure: folders, digital planners, color-coded systems
Avoids long-term tasks until last minute	Break large tasks into mini-deadlines with feedback checkpoints
Gives up quickly when tasks require sustained effort or planning	Model strategic thinking aloud: "Here's how I'd break this down..."
Writes without planning → disorganized or incomplete work	Teach "pause and plan": mind maps, outlines, bullet lists before writing

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Low Attention = Inconsistent Focus, Mental Fatigue, Sensory Overload

Looks Like:	Support With:
Appears “zoned out” or hyper-focused, but not on the assigned task	Use short, clear task segments: “Do this part first,” visual timers
Struggles to shift between subjects, transitions, or routines	Provide predictable routines; give verbal cues and countdowns before transitions
Overwhelms/shuts down in noisy, busy classrooms	Reduce sensory input: quiet corner, noise buffers, sunglasses/hood
Looks like ADHD, but may be autistic burnout, anxiety, or sensory fatigue	Offer movement or regulation tools without punishment or stigma
Jumps from task to task or gets “stuck” in one area	Avoid rapid-fire transitions or multitasking demands; allow completion or closure

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Low Successive = Trouble with Order, Phonics, and Step-by-Step Information

Looks Like:	Support With:
Difficulty decoding words sound-by-sound	Explicit phonics instruction, tapping/clapping syllables, Orton-Gillingham-like routines
Forgets or mixes steps in multi-step math problems or directions	Provide step-by-step visual sequences (written or graphic)
Reverses letters/numbers, struggles with left-right or order-based memory	Use rhythm, repetition, multisensory sequencing strategies
Can explain ideas but writing is out of order or jumbled	Offer sentence frames, graphic sequencing, or speech-to-text pre-writing
Gets lost when verbal instructions are long	Give instructions one step at a time + written backup

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Low Simultaneous = Hard to See the “Whole,” Organize Ideas, or Process Visual Information

Looks Like:	Support With:
Remembers details but misses the main idea in reading	Start with a summary or visual organizer before reading
Struggles with geometry, maps, word problems (visual organization)	Use visual models, manipulatives, diagrams made explicit
Overwhelmed by open-ended assignments (“Just write a paragraph...”)	Give templates, models, and exemplars of completed work
Can write strong sentences but cannot structure essays or arguments	Teach whole→part writing with outlines, boxes, and frames
Gets stuck when too many instructions are presented at once	Break tasks into visual chunks; color-code related parts

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High-Ability + Specific Weakness = Masked Learning Needs

Looks Like:	Support With:
Bright, verbal, creative, but missing work or inconsistent performance	Combine enrichment with structure: planning tools, check-ins
Adults say “They’re so smart, they just don’t try”	Avoid “lazy” labels; assume lagging skills, not missing willpower
High test scores but low writing output or disorganized work	Allow alternative formats: typing, recording, visuals, dictation
Meltdowns, perfectionism, shutdown when effort is required	Normalize mistakes, offer “draft passes,” reduce performance pressure
Uses strengths to compensate and hide weaknesses... until it breaks	Make cognitive profile explicit to student; teach self-awareness + advocacy

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PASS Rating Scale (PRS)

Child's name: _____ Person completing the form: _____
 Test date: _____ Relationship to the child: _____

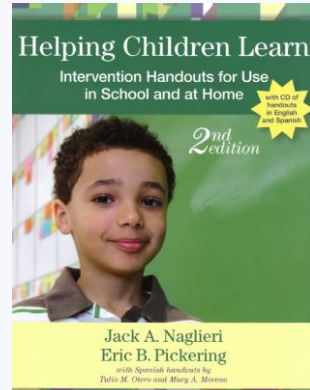
Directions: This scale contains descriptions of behaviors that can help determine how well the child can use important cognitive processes. To use this scale, rate the questions on the basis of your knowledge of the child. Read each statement and put a checkmark under the word that tells how often you observed the behavior. If you want to change your answer, cross out your first response and fill in your new choice. Answer every question.

During the past 2 months, how often did the child	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1. Work in a well-organized and neat way				
2. Use strategies and plans when doing work				
3. Evaluate his or her own behavior				
4. Think before acting				
5. Have many ideas about how to do things				
6. Show self-control				
7. Perform well on spatial activities (e.g., maps, diagrams)				
8. Understand how things go together				
9. See the big picture				
10. Understand complex verbal instructions				
11. Work well with patterns				
12. Like to use visual materials				
13. Focus well on one thing				
14. Work without being distracted by people or noises				
15. Pay close attention				
16. Listen to instructions without being distracted				
17. Work well for a long time				
18. Work well in a noisy environment				
19. Work well with information in sequence				
20. Do well with things presented step by step				
21. Remember the order of information				
22. Understand directions presented in sequence				
23. Do well working with sounds in order				
24. Closely follow directions presented in order				

Copyright © 1997 by Jack A. Naglieri. In *Helping Children Learn: Intervention Handouts for Use in School and at Home*. Second Edition, by Jack A. Naglieri & Eric B. Pickering. (2010). Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.)

Figure 2.11. The PASS Rating Scale.

PASS Rating Scale in Helping Children Learn



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CAS2 Rating Scale

<https://www.proedinc.com/Products/14295/cas-2-rating-scale--complete-kit.aspx>

CAS2 Rating Scale

Cognitive Assessment System: Rating Scale
SECOND EDITION

Rating Form

Jack A. Naglieri J. P. Das Sam Goldstein

Section 1. Identifying Information

Student's Name _____
 Sex: Female ☐ Male ☐ Grade _____
 School _____
 Rater's Name _____
 Rater's Title _____

Rater Has Known Student for: _____ (year/months)

Date of Rating _____
 Date of Birth _____
 Age _____

Section 2. Rating Instructions and Scales

The CAS2 Rating Scale is designed to assess classroom behaviors seen by a teacher who has had at least 4 weeks of experience with the student. The behaviors are organized into four groups, which will be used to obtain scores for four different scales. Each scale contains 10 questions that are scored on the basis of how often specific behaviors were seen. The scores for each question range from never to always.

To complete the form, read each statement that follows the phrase, "During the past month, how often did the child or adolescent..." then circle the number under the word that tells how often the behavior was seen. Read each question carefully, then mark how often the behavior was seen in the past month. Answer every question without skipping any. If you want to change your answer, put an X through it and circle your new choice. Be sure to answer every question.

Teachers should rate all items to the best of their ability, given their knowledge of the student and the student's peers. In some cases, teachers may have only indirect knowledge of the student's performance; nonetheless, the teacher should provide the best rating possible.

It is important that ratings should be based on the student's behavior regardless of the language or medium used.

© 2014 by PRO-ED, Inc.

Additional copies of this form (H-14297) may be purchased from PRO-ED, 4700 Wood Creek Blvd., Austin, TX 78757-0887. 800-897-3223, Fax 800-797-7633, www.proedinc.com

Directions for Items 1–10. These questions ask how well the child or adolescent decides how to do things to achieve a goal. They also ask how well a child or adolescent thinks before acting and avoids impulsivity. Please rate how well the child or adolescent controls plans and strategies to solve problems.

During the past month, how often did the child or adolescent ...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1. produce a well-written sentence or a story?					
2. evaluate his or her own actions?					
3. produce several ways to solve a problem?					
4. Have many ideas about how to do things?					
5. Have a good idea about how to complete a task?					
6. solve a problem with a new solution when the old one did not work?					
7. use information from many sources when doing work?					
8. effectively solve new problems?					
9. have well-developed goals?					
10. consider new ways to finish a task?					

Planning Scale

Directions for Items 11–20. These questions ask how well the child or adolescent sees how things go together. They also ask about working with diagrams and understanding how ideas fit together. The questions involve seeing the whole without getting lost in the parts. Please rate how well the child or adolescent studies things as a whole.

During the past month, how often did the child or adolescent ...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
11. like to draw designs?					
12. figure out how parts of a design go together?					
13. classify things into groups carefully?					
14. work well with patterns and designs?					
15. look how objects and ideas are related?					
16. work well with physical objects?					
17. like to use visual materials?					
18. see the links among several things?					
19. show interest in complex shapes and patterns?					
20. recognize faces easily?					

Relationship Scale

Directions for Items 21–30. These questions ask how well the child or adolescent pays attention and avoids distractions. The questions also ask how well someone attends to one thing at a time. Please rate how well the child or adolescent pays attention.

During the past month, how often did the child or adolescent ...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
21. work well on a busy task?					
22. stay with one task long enough to complete it?					
23. not allow the actions or conversations of others to interrupt his or her work?					
24. stay on task easily?					
25. concentrate on a task until it was done?					
26. listen carefully?					
27. work without getting distracted?					
28. have a good attention span?					
29. listen to instructions or directions without getting off task?					
30. pay attention in class?					

Attention Scale

Directions for Items 31–40. These questions ask how well the child or adolescent remembers things in order. The questions ask about working with numbers, words, or ideas in series. The questions also ask about doing things in a certain order. Please rate how well the child or adolescent works with things in a specific order.

During the past month, how often did the child or adolescent ...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
31. recall a phone number after hearing it?					
32. remember a list of words?					
33. sound out hard words?					
34. correctly repeat long, new words?					
35. remember how to spell long words after seeing them once?					
36. imitate a long sequence of sounds?					
37. recall a sequence of ideas used for a story?					
38. repeat long words easily?					
39. repeat sentences easily, in order or out of order?					
40. follow three to four directions given in order?					

Sequencing Scale

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Cognitive Assessment System: Brief
SECOND EDITION

Examiner Record Form
Jack A. Naglieri J. P. Das Sam Goldstein

Section 1. Identifying Information

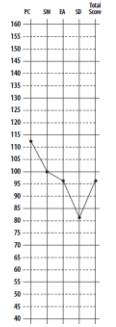
Student's Name: Tommy
Sex: Female ☐ Male ☒ Grade: 1st
School: Parvate Elementary
Examiner: R. Dunham, PhD

Date Tested: 2008 Year 12 Month 11 Day 22
Date of Birth: 2008 Year 11 Month 11 Day 22
Age: 6 Year 6 Month 9

Section 2. Subtest and Composite Performance

Subtest	Raw Score	PC	SM	EA	SD
Planned Codes (PC)	16	112			
Simultaneous Matrices (SM)	16		100		
Expressive Attention (EA)	33			96	
Successive Digits (SD)	7				82
Sum of Subtest Index Scores		112	100	96	82
Composite Index Score		96			
Percentile Rank		74	50	40	12
Upper		118	111	107	96
Lower		105	84	84	72

Section 3. Subtest and Composite Profile



Section 4. Subtest Comparisons

Compare each subtest standard score to the student's mean subtest score using Tables D.1 and D.2 of the Examiner's Manual.

Subtest	Index Score	d Index	(SD) %	Strengths Weaknesses	% in sample
Planned Codes (PC)	112	14.5	(5) 15	100	15.1
Simultaneous Matrices (SM)	100	2.5	(4) 10	100	82.8
Expressive Attention (EA)	96	-1.5	(4) 10	100	87.8
Successive Digits (SD)	82	-15.5	(5) 15	100	16.2
Subtest mean	96				

Section 5. Descriptive Terms

Index Scores	<70	70-79	80-89	90-109	110-119	120-129	≥130
Descriptive Terms	Very Poor	Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Superior	Very Superior

Figure 3.1. Example of page 1 of the CAS2: Brief Examiner Record Form, completed for Tommy.

CAS2 Brief

<https://www.proedinc.com/Products/14285/cas2-brief-complete-kit.aspx>

CAS2: Brief

Subtest

Planned Codes

Simultaneous Matrices

Expressive Attention

Successive Digits

Composite

Total Score

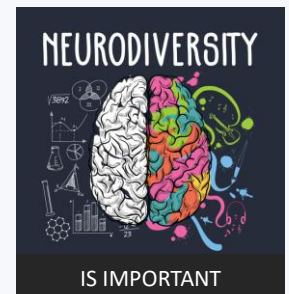
QUALIFICATIONS OF USERS

All those who use the CAS2: Brief should be knowledgeable about testing; procedures related to using, scoring, and interpreting test results; and the PASS theory. This would include educational diagnosticians, school psychologists, speech and language specialists, special ed teachers with testing backgrounds.

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Key Points

- Neurodiversity is *real* and *measurable*. It shows up in cognitive patterns, not just diagnoses. Sometimes this variability suggests a disability.
- Support should match processing, not labels. Gifted doesn't mean independent; ADHD doesn't mean lazy; autism doesn't mean uninterested.
- Approximately 35% of the time students showed variability in the PASS brain-based scales on the CAS2. Variability is not a flaw, it's information. It tells us how to teach, not just what to fix.



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