Nelson-Denny Reading Test

Description: The Nelson-Denny Reading Test is a reading survey test used with high school and college students. Two forms (G and H) can be used as pre- and post-test assessments. Standard administration takes approximately 35 minutes.

Publisher: Riverside Publishing

Grade Levels: 9-16

Skills/Standards Assessed: The Nelson-Denny Reading Test assesses student achievement and progress in vocabulary, comprehension, and reading rate.

Report Format/Results Type: The Nelson-Denny Reading Test provides scores for students’ performance on Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Total. Scores are presented as raw scores, scaled scores, grade-equivalent scores, normal curve equivalent scores, national percentile ranks, and national stanines. The reading rate is reported in words per minute.

Research Based: There is partially convincing evidence for the research base and development of the Nelson-Denny Reading Test:

The 1993 Nelson-Denny Reading Test is the latest edition of the test initially published in 1929. This version was developed after a survey of users was completed in 1989. The results, based on a 27% return rate, were used to revise the instrument. However, the overall test format remains generally unchanged. To address the qualities of a test as old as the Nelson-Denny, comparison of the test's characteristics in previous and current versions seems relevant. (Murray-Ward, 1998)

Reliable and Valid: There is partially convincing evidence for the reliability and validity for the Nelson-Denny Reading Test. One MMY review indicates that there is adequate evidence of the reliability of the assessment tool, however, there is some concern regarding the tool’s validity:

Although the test does measure general reading, it does not measure performance on more current materials and varied reading tasks required of students. Furthermore, the validity evidence does not substantiate claims that the test can be used to diagnose specific reading problems. (Murray-Ward, 1998)
Further, recent research has called into question the content validity of the assessment and its appropriateness in special education diagnosis (Coleman, Lindstrom, Nelson, Lindstrom, & Gregg, 2010).

**Multiple Data Points:**
There is partially convincing evidence to support the use of the Nelson-Denny Reading Test in multiple data points as the assessment may be used to as a pre-test/post-test format with the two different forms (G and H; Riverside Publishing, 2010).

**Aligned with Reading Standards:**
There is convincing evidence that the Nelson-Denny Reading Test assessment tool is aligned with state and national reading standards (Riverside Publishing, 2010). Specifically, the assessment is aligned with the Common Core Standards in that it (1) addresses major areas of reading including vocabulary and comprehension, and (2) is sensitive to text complexity (i.e., leveled items of differing difficulty level).

**Sensitive and appropriate for differing cultures and needs:**
There is partially convincing evidence that the Nelson-Denny Reading Test assessment tool is sensitive and appropriate for individuals with differing cultures and needs. The developers state “A unique feature of the 1993 edition is the extended-time administration of the test to meet the needs of special populations, such as students with English as a second language or as a foreign language, or returning adults” (Riverside Publishing, 2010). Further, items were “carefully designed to avoid racial and gender bias” (Riverside Publishing, 2010). However, the developers have yet to address this domain fully in the development of alternative language forms or by providing disaggregated norms.

**References**

