

Interpreting Test Results for teachers and parents

About the 1970 California Achievement Tests (the CAT)

1. It is independent of curriculum and teachers and gives an unbiased view of your student's skills.
2. It tests three skills: Reading, writing (Language), and Mathematics, which are basic to all other academic studies.
3. Benefits of an earlier version of the CAT: Your students are being compared with 1970 students, who, as a whole, scored better than today's public school students. The 1970 CAT also has a less humanistic emphasis than newer achievement tests.

NOTE: Scores give precise numbers; however, students' abilities can not be measured precisely. How a student performs on a given day depends on his alertness, mood, environment, and other factors. Tests at best give us a general idea of the student's progress.

Sections of the Test and what they measure

Reading

Vocabulary: Measures a student's knowledge of words and their meanings.

Comprehension: Tests the ability to find information in books and the ability to understand what is read.

Mathematics

Computation: Tests the ability to do basic math operations.

Fractions (Level 3 only): Tests the ability to work with fractions and mixed numbers (Fractions are integrated in the other mathematics sections for Levels 4 and 5).

Concepts & Problems

Concepts: Tests understanding of math concepts, such as signs and symbols, units of measurement, number systems (such as Roman numerals), place values, and algebra- and geometry-related concepts.

Problems: Measures the ability to comprehend and correctly answer word problems.

Language

Auding (Level 1 only): Tests the ability to comprehend and use what is heard by answering questions about stories given orally, and by following verbal directions.

Mechanics

Capitalization: Measures the ability to recognize words that need to be capitalized, such as proper nouns and the first word of a sentence.

Punctuation: Tests the ability to recognize what type of punctuation is needed and where it is placed.

Usage and Structure

Usage: Tests recognition of standard and nonstandard English.

Structure: Tests knowledge of sentence structure in various ways, such as recognizing sentence types, transformation of one sentence type into another (example: changing a statement into a question), recognizing complete and incomplete sentences, phrases, clauses, and parts of speech.

Spelling: Tests the ability to recognize misspelled words.

Types of Scores

Raw: the number of correctly answered items in a section; not a meaningful measure of performance

Possible (not really a score): the total number of problems in a section

(1970)**Percentile:** Percentage of students that scored lower on the test (The comparison, or *norm*, group is 203,684 public school and Catholic school students from 1970). The percentile score is not the percentage of items answered correctly.

Grade Equivalent: The student did as well as the median student from the norm group did at the given grade and month in school. If a student does as well as an average 8th grader in the 7th month of school did, his GE score would be 8.7. Note: GE scores alone should not be used to determine a student's grade placement, since a student can make a high score without necessarily mastering all the concepts up to that grade level.

Stanine: A simplified ranking scale of one through nine based on the percentile score. The 1970 CAT Examiner's Manual describes the levels as follows:

9 - Highest level	4 - Slightly below average
8 - High level	3 - Well below average
7 - Well above average	2 - Low level
6 - Slightly above average	1 - Lowest level
5 - Average	

Achievement Development Scale Scores (ADSS): A ranking scale of approximately 100 to 900 that measures the student's skill level; it is consistent for all levels and forms of the CAT, and is mainly used to track a student's progress from year to year.

Catforms Percentile: Percentage of Catforms tests in the same level that had lower 1970 percentile scores. Catforms tests are 1970 CAT tests recorded by Catforms Testing Service, and come predominately from conservative Mennonite schools. This norm group represents better students, on the average, than those of the original 1970 norm group from public schools. This creates a tougher standard of measurement; therefore, your students' Catforms percentile scores will usually be lower than their regular (1970) percentile scores.

Average Level X Catforms student (found only on Current Percentile Scores graph on the Achievement Test Profile): Plots the 1970 percentile scores of the average Catforms test for comparison with the bar graph of the student's 1970 percentile scores. This method of comparing a student's test results with those of his peers today may be simpler to understand and explain than the Catforms percentile scores.

Sharing Test Results

Test results do no good if not reported to those who can benefit by them, specifically teachers and parents. They must, however, be accompanied with sufficient explanation so that they are properly interpreted. We recommend private parent-teacher conferences as a good time to go over test results with parents. We suggest sticking to just a few types of scores, such as stanines or percentiles, that are easy to explain accurately. The individual items on the Achievement Test Analysis may pinpoint specific weaknesses that may otherwise go unnoticed, and are fairly simple to explain to parents.

The confidentiality of the tests must also be respected. All test results should be kept from prying eyes, and we do not recommend that students be given copies of their own. What they are told about their performance should be at the discretion of school officials; benefits should be weighed against possible discouragement or inflated egos.