

Student Testing – *Why We Do It, What It Means!*

As you are aware, over the last few weeks we have been testing nearly all of the students at the school. Testing is administered twice per year – once in the fall, and then again in the spring. The purpose of the testing is to provide a snapshot in time of your child's knowledge and ability compared to age-specific developmental standards. The testing is also very useful for the teachers in identifying areas where more focus is required in the classroom.

Please be aware that as a whole, children attending Suzuki tend to score very high on these instruments. The national norms used in establishing developmental categories are taken from a wide range of children with varying educational backgrounds. Children who attend schools with enriched learning environments such as Suzuki develop skills above those being measured for their age group.

At Suzuki, we use three testing tools:

For children in Levels I through IV, we use the Portage Guide. This instrument measures developmental skills in five areas: *cognitive, motor, self help, language and social skills*. These areas are measured through observation.

Children in Levels V through VIII are tested using the Brigance Screen. This testing tool is a criterion-referenced instrument which measures cognitive ability and readiness. It is composed of tasks requiring student responses for *personal data, recognition, vocabulary, visual discrimination, fine/large motor skills, listening, comprehension and speech*.

Our kindergarten class is tested in the spring using the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills). The test is comprised of three major components: *Vocabulary (Listening and Language), Math and Word Analysis*. Designed to provide measures of important pre-reading and pre-math skills that are currently emphasized in Kindergarten and beginning Grade 1 instruction, this test will offer results focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of each child. Abilities are ranked through standard scores, grade equivalents, national stanines and national percentile ranks.

Please keep in mind that the testing is informational and directional in nature, and is not part of any permanent record. On any given day, children may not do well on a test simply because they are "not into it" that day. Do not let this stress you out. The tests only give an approximation of their ability. More valid and informative is the daily interaction with your child's teachers; together, you will assess your child's needs and unique gifts.

As always, please feel free to give me a call if you have any questions or concerns!

Sincerely,

Debra Markham
School Director