***Work Sampling System (WSS)***

The Work Sampling System (Meisels, Jablon, Marsden, Dichtelmiller, & Dorfman, 1994) is a comprehensive performance assessment for use with children in preschool through grade 5. The system is used to document and assess children's knowledge, behavior, and accomplishments. A curriculum-embedded system that records how children respond to real classroom tasks and actual life situations, it is used to monitor physical, social, emotional, and academic progress.

The Work Sampling System consists of three parts: (1) Developmental Guidelines and Checklists, (2) Portfolios, and (3) Summary Reports. Classroom teachers observe student behavior and performance using the structured framework provided by the Developmental Guidelines. They record their observations on Checklists and gather student products in Portfolios as backup support for their observations. Three times each year, they summarize their observations of student performance and progress using the Summary Reports. These three components are described as follows:

*Developmental Guidelines* give teachers a framework for observation. They are a set of observational criteria based on national standards and current knowledge of child development, expectations used to evaluate student performance at different ages.
*Developmental Checklists* are lists of grade- specific performance indicators. Teachers check off those behaviors, skills, and knowledge that children exhibit.
*Portfolios* are purposeful collections of children's work and progress over time. Portfolios comprise two kinds of items: core items and individualized items. Core items describe

growth in student performance over time in one area. Individualized items describe the growth of an individual student across several domains.

The authors of the Work Sampling System have identified seven categories of student behavior and performance in which data are collected. These are listed and described as follows:

*Personal and Social Adjustment.* Teachers record information both about social development and about how children feel about themselves. They gather it by observing and questioning individual students.

*Language and Literacy.* Teachers record data on acquisition of language skills.

*Mathematical Thinking.* Teachers observe and record development of mathematical problem-solving skills.

*Scientific Thinking.* Teachers observe and record development of the ways in which students think about and ask about the natural and physical world. They note how children actively investigate through observing, recording, describing, questioning, forming explanations, and reaching conclusions.

*Social Studies.* Teachers gather data on acquisition of social and cultural understanding.

*Arts.* Data are collected on children's engagement with dance, drama, music, and art.

*Physical Development.* Teachers note changes in students' gross-motor skills, fine-motor skills, and personal health and safety.

There are specific factors that teachers must observe as they record and make judgments about student development. For each domain, the authors specify functional

components and performance indicators. Teachers make judgments using a simple rubric. They record on the summary record whether the student is performing as expected or needs improvement.

*Reliability*

The most critical kind of reliability for a measure of this type is interrater agreement. The authors do not include data on the extent to which there is agreement across teachers in ratings of student performance and behavior.

*Validity*

There is no evidence for validity included in the manuals for the Work Sampling System. Meisels, Bickel, Nicholson, Xue, and Atkins-Burnett (1998) have published a technical report that accompanies the manuals and addresses the validity of the Work Sampling System. Correlations of scores on the WSS Checklist and Summary Report ratings with scores on the Woodcock–Johnson Psychoeducational Battery–Revised were within the range of .50 to .75 across four grade levels. Scores on the WSS were better predictors of future WSS scores than were any other demographic factors.

*Summary*

The Work Sampling System is a curriculum-embedded performance assessment that provides a profile of individual students' strengths and weaknesses across seven curriculum domains. Teachers are provided with a conceptual framework of performance indicators in the seven domains and use observation and collection of student work to make judgments about student performance and progress. The WSS is a rating system, and there are no data on the extent to which teachers agree in their ratings of student performance. Evidence for validity of the system is based on correlations with performance on the Woodcock–Johnson Psychoeducational Battery–Revised.