

Using the *Universal Talented and Gifted Screener* to Predict Students' School Success

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Purpose

The purpose of the current study is to contribute independent validation data for the *Universal Talented and Gifted Screener (UTAGS)*, and to compare the results of the *UTAGS* scores to other operationalizations of school success. *UTAGS* was developed as a brief assessment to gauge the success of school age children relative to local AND national peers. The six scales of school performance assessed include Cognition, Creativity, Leadership, Literacy, Math and Science.

Rationale

Levels of performance that might be characterized as a strength or weakness in one region of the country might be considered differently in another region. Consequently, screening and identifying students who are at-risk for educational failure or those who are intellectually, academically, or creatively gifted is considerably bound in geographical, cultural, and social values and expectations. The *UTAGS* is unique in that it was developed to operationalize teacher ratings of student performance relative to national AND local peers. Localized norms can provide more contextually meaningful information (McCallum & Bracken, 2018). Local comparisons may be obtained by relying on ratings by teachers who are familiar with the local context, and can identify a target student's strengths and weaknesses in comparison to local peers (Brophy & Good, 1974; Gresham, MacMillan, & Bocian, 1997; Hammill & Hresko, 1994; Keogh & Smith, 1970; Meisels, Bickel, Nicholson, Xue, & Atkins-Burnett, 2001). The psychometric properties of *UTAGS* are excellent, with rater reliabilities for the scales above .90. Validity is strong as well, with typical correlations between the *UTAGS* and other related instruments and between *UTAGS* and end of year academic achievement scores ranging from .40 to .70. However, no independent data have been collected to corroborate the utility of the *UTAGS*.

Methodology

In the study, 64 students (27 females and 37 males, grades 3-5) participated during the 2015-2016 academic year to determine relations between *UTAGS* variables and several other operationalizations of school success in the social and academic areas. Subscale means were then compared between gifted and non-gifted peers, shown in the figure below. In addition to the *UTAGS*, teachers provided ratings of their students' emotional intelligence based on results from the Bar-On Scale of Emotional Intelligence. Composite academic scores were taken from the *North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests (NCEOG, 2013)* measures of literacy, math, and science, as well.

Results

- The relation between the *UTAGS* Science scale and the EI Interpersonal and General Mood scales were significantly positively correlated at .31 and .29 respectively ($p=.03$; $p=.04$)
- The *UTAGS* Math scale was significantly positively correlated with total EI at .31 ($p=.03$)
- Coefficients reflecting the relations between *UTAGS* scales and reading *NCEOG* scores ranged from .26 (Creativity) to .61 (Literacy)
- Coefficients reflecting the relations between *UTAGS* scales and math *NCEOG* scores ranged from .48 (Creativity) and .71 (Cognitive)
- All means from the gifted students are higher than their non-gifted peers, as shown in *Figure 1*



Figure 1. Difference in gifted and non-gifted means

Discussion

Data from this study support the efficacy of screening and identifying students who may be at-risk for educational failure or those who are intellectually, academically, or creatively gifted based on *local* expectations using the *UTAGS*. These data indicate that *UTAGS* can discriminate based on giftedness status. Variables assessed by *UTAGS* are critical for school success, and the moderate correlations obtained between *UTAGS* and other important school-based outcomes in this study reflect linkages among these instruments based on localized data, although national norms are also available. The areas assessed by the *UTAGS* are related to other outcomes that are important for school success, such as emotional intelligence and academic success. Additionally, although brief, the *UTAGS* is sensitive enough to provide teachers with information they can use to target additional assessment and interventions.

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