



Evidence-Based Intervention: Dynamic Assessment

1. Introduction

Dynamic assessment (DA) is an approach to assessment which uses a mediated learning task to explore the cognitive and affective factors impacting a child's learning. It is often used by Educational Psychologists (EPs), and other professionals.

2. Purpose of Intervention

DA is used to:

- Explore the cognitive and affective factors impacting a child's learning, providing a rich picture about how they learn.
- Explore mediation strategies which might help a child to make progress, and which could be applied in the classroom.

3. Target Audience

DA can be used with a range of children and young people, and the approach can be adapted depending on the specific areas being explored, age and needs of the child. Often, DA is used when children are finding learning difficult, to consider why this might be and the support that might be needed. DA can also be particularly helpful for children who might find more standardised assessments challenging, for example those with social, emotional and mental health needs who may need additional support to remain regulated.

4. Who Can Deliver the Intervention

DA is often used by EPs or Trainee EPs, however it may also be used by other professionals, including Assistant Psychologists, Inclusion Facilitators, Specialist Teachers or school staff trained in DA principles.

5. Session Structure

This is flexible, depending on the needs of the child, the task being used and the best hopes for the involvement. DA generally involves presenting the child with a task and observing how they respond to it. The professional will then provide mediation and scaffolding to support the child to make progress on the task, noticing how the child responds to the mediation and the difference it makes to their performance on the task.

6. Frequency and Duration

DA is often used as a one-off assessment activity. However, if there is the opportunity for repeated DA sessions this would be beneficial, to support generalisation of the



child's learning to different situations, and a more in-depth exploration of their strengths and challenges.

7. Key Principles

- Learning takes place in a social environment, and therefore exploring what a child can do with support is useful and important.
- Learning ability is not fixed, but involves adaptation and a range of cognitive and affective factors.

8. Training and Implementation

To deliver DA, the mediator should have received some training in the psychological principles of DA. However, we would encourage any adults working with children to think dynamically about learning, considering the skills that a child may be showing on a task, and the mediation that is required to support them to make progress. School staff who have attended training with Judith Carter on the Essential SENCo toolkit and the 7 C's model may recognise many of the principles, as there are shared psychological foundations.

9. Evidence and Outcomes

DA is underpinned by the following psychological principles:

- **Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky).** This includes the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is what a learner can do with support, and emphasises the importance of context and collaboration in learning.
- **Structural Cognitive Modifiability (Feurstein).** This suggests that intelligence is not fixed but involves adaptation, and includes cognitive functions and affective factors.
- **Mediated Learning Experience (Feurstein).** This is where a mediator 'stands between' the task and the learning, to support the learner to complete tasks within their ZPD.
- **Metacognition and self-regulated learning.** There is overlap between the skills required for metacognition and self-regulated learning, and cognitive functions and affective factors identified by Feurstein. This includes awareness of thinking processes, use of a strategy, reflection and self-monitoring.
- **Executive functions.** There is overlap between several of the executive functions and cognitive functions identified by Feurstein. This includes inhibitory control, working memory, cognitive flexibility, abstract reasoning, planning and problem-solving.



There is evidence suggesting that DA can lead to positive outcomes for the child, school staff and the professional involved.

10. Feedback

The Dynamic Assessment UK website reports that teachers have shared:

- Increased confidence in assessing and supporting learners.
- Greater insight into children's learning processes.
- Positive impact on classroom practice and relationships.

Feedback from children and young people suggests that they:

- Feel more confident and motivated after receiving feedback, especially when it's interactive and clear.
- Enjoy being involved in the process, which increases engagement and ownership of learning.
- Experience a boost in self-esteem because challenges are framed as solvable, not as fixed deficits.
- Prefer the collaborative style over traditional tests, describing it as less stressful and more supportive.
- Gain better understanding of learning strategies, helping them feel capable and resilient.

11. Further Information and Resources

- Resources: [DA learning resources | Dynamic Assessment UK](#)
- Video: [What is Dynamic Assessment?](#)
- Video: [An Introduction to Dynamic Assessment and Mediated Learning Experiences](#)
- Video: [Mediating Learning in Dynamic Assessment with Rachael Green](#)
- Blog: [Dynamic Assessment: A Journey](#)
- Book: [Applying Dynamic Assessment in Schools: A Practical Approach to Improving Learning by Fraser Lauchlan and Clare Daly](#)
- Research: [Dynamic assessment research](#)