
COMPUTER ADAPTIVE TESTS

Speaker: Lucky Abernathy, The College Board

Introducer/Recorder: Karen Greenberg, National Testing Network in Writing

Lucky Abernathy presented a hands-on demonstration of new computerized adaptive tests recently developed by the College Board in conjunction with the Educational Testing Service. The tests use personal computer technology in conjunction with newly refined concepts of item response theory in order to individualize the set of items presented to each test-taker. The tests are designed to identify student entry skill level in Reading Comprehension, Writing Skills, Arithmetic, and Elementary Algebra.

Abernathy noted that the Computerized Placement Tests (CPTs) are based on the New Jersey College Basic Skills Placement Tests. The tests give test-takers and institutions

immediate feedback about students' skills. He also said that the CPTs provide fine discrimination over a wide range of ability levels but present students with a minimum of items to answer (because they eliminate items that fall out of each student's ability range). Furthermore, he pointed out that the large storage capacity of most computers means that CPTs have many more questions at all difficulty levels available than can be published in a linear paper-and-pencil format. Abernathy ended the demonstration by showing the three types of scores generated by the CPTs (total right score, range, and percentile) and the four types of written reports that the test software can generate (percentile, individual, roster of total right scores, and summary of total right scores).◊