School psychologists spend the vast majority of their assessment duties administering standardized tests. The term 'standardized' refers to the effort to have such tests administered and scored the same way every time. Questions are asked, directions are delivered, and queries are made in an identical manner for each administration. Most standardized tests are thus administered in a face-to-face manner. These demands make the administration of standardized testing particularly problematic with current social distancing protocols. The intent of this section is to identify the options for face-to-face testing and to clarify the reasons for WSASP’s limited support for remote administration of standardized tests.

Providing cognitive assessments is a consistent role for school psychologists. The vast majority of these tests require face-to-face assessment with students. The value of administering these tests in the manner prescribed include:

- A high degree of reliability, making the test results more interpretable
- The opportunity to observe testing (problem-solving) behavior of the student
- The ability to maintain student confidentiality
- Extensive training in the administration and scoring of such tests
- Guaranteed equity for students, in terms of being able to access the test
- No other personnel, equipment, or new training necessary, with no demands on family members
- Availability of student and quiet environment free of distraction
- Ability to ensure professional ethical standards of test administration

Recently, the option of remotely-administered, online cognitive testing has surfaced due to the COVID-19 school closure. The provided list of values associated with face-to-face testing becomes a list of concerns if the cognitive assessment is conducted remotely. The WAC provides guidance about standardized assessments, stating that school psychologists should use technically sound instruments, which are used for the purposes for which the assessments or measures are valid and reliable, and which are administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel (WAC 392-172a-03020). While school psychologists are trained to administer these assessments face to face, virtual assessment procedures and physical materials are different and require specific training. Most school psychologists lack adequate training to provide virtual assessment at this time. Existing testing kits and materials are not appropriate to use in a virtual assessment setting and are not valid when used in this manner.
Additionally, distractions that take place in the home, the availability of a trained adult to proctor materials in the home, lack of confidentiality, additional technology and psychologist training required, and prohibitive cost all result in a situation that may violate the NASP Principles for Professional Ethics, and this may result in invalid results that do not reflect student ability level. Virtual assessment could be a strategy adopted over time, but it will require significant investment in materials and training to be a viable option producing valid results.

There is a further and final consideration for the use of direct standardized assessment with students during this extraordinary time: we are all experiencing a time of crisis. Most school psychologists will refrain from testing students prior to a break, during preferred classes or activities, after a trauma in the family, or after a school crisis. School psychologists refrain from testing in these circumstances due to concerns that students do not perform their best under those emotionally trying circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic is a school crisis, a home crisis, and a public health crisis. COVID-19 is extraordinary in how it has impacted everyone’s daily lives. To administer a standardized assessment in this time and presume the results are generalizable to a student’s typical ability may be unjustified. School psychologists must consider the appropriateness of any assessments we give in these circumstances.

**WSASP recommends that school psychologists and evaluation teams carefully consider the need for current cognitive assessment as part of the current evaluation.** The team should consider past data that may reflect current levels of cognitive functioning, as well as if the suspected disability category requires cognitive assessment. If such assessment is required, evaluation teams should consider those options outlined in the WSASP Guidance for Special Education Evaluations During the COVID-19 Closure document to complete the evaluation in the fall.