



Raw Score Versus Progress Scores

Many people understand assessment based on their own experiences with classroom assessments. Often in those situations, test questions are scored either as correct or incorrect and the score is reported as a percentage (number correct divided by the total number of questions). Grades are assigned based on a teacher's determination of what level of performance or percentage is a passing grade.

The Forward Exam is scored by a different process known as Item Response Theory (IRT). For large-scale standardized assessments, IRT scoring is a more accurate representation of students' knowledge of the content area. With IRT, test questions are treated independently and viewed as samples of the reporting category (e.g., algebra, geography, vocabulary) with questions varying in difficulty. Correctly answering a more difficult question will contribute more towards a higher score than correctly answering an easier question.

A Standards Performance Index (SPI) is a score produced by IRT and on Wisconsin reports the SPI is known as a Progress Score. The formula for calculating the Progress Score takes into account question difficulty within the reporting category, as well as student overall performance on the content area test. The Progress Score estimates how many questions a student would have answered correctly if there had been 100 questions covering that reporting category on the test. Progress Levels (Developing, Approaching, Meeting and Advanced) are calculated for each reporting category

For example:

There are 10 test questions, covering a range of difficulty, in the algebra reporting category on the mathematics test.

Student A answers 6 questions correctly and has a raw score of 6 out of 10 in the algebra reporting category. Student A receives a Progress Level of meeting because the 6 questions that student answered correctly were more difficult and the student also performed better on other reporting categories on the mathematics test.

Student B answers 6 questions correctly and has a raw score of 6 out of 10 in the algebra reporting category. Student B receives a Progress Level of approaching because the 6 questions that student answered correctly were easier and the student also did not perform well on other reporting categories on the mathematics test.

A more thorough discussion of SPI is available in the [Standards Performance Index \(SPI\) Handout](#).