Burde, D., J. Middleton, and C. Samii. 2017. Assessment of Learning Outcomes and Social Effects of Community-Based Education: A Randomized Field Experiment in Afghanistan. NYU ALSE Learning Assessment Survey Training Manual. New York: Steinhardt School, New York University.

# **NYU ALSE Learning Assessment**

### TRAINING MANUAL

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## About this guide

The learning assessment assesses children's basic literacy and numeracy skills. The assessment includes recognition of numbers and letters, phonemic awareness (differentiating for sounds and their meaning) and listening comprehension. This part of the survey differs from other components since you will be working directly with children. This manual explains the specific skills, abilities, and considerations required for working with children and provides instructions for conducting the learning assessment.

#### Research with children

Research with children is different to research with adults in two important ways:

- 1. Children, especially younger children, may not be able to communicate their feelings as well as adults.
- 2. Because adults often represent authority figures (parent, teacher, Imam) children may feel intimidated by adults, which can make them less likely to speak up. Alternatively they may feel pressured into participating.

Therefore, although all research needs to occur within the same strict ethical guidelines, particular care needs to be taken when conducting research with children. As a researcher, it is your job to make sure that the children taking the learning assessment feel comfortable and understand the purpose of the assessment. It is your responsibility to adapt to the child's level of understanding. To help you do this, it's important to think about two things: (1) how you engage the child's participation, and (2) how you communicate with the child.

#### **Participation**

Children, like adults, should be made to feel like participants in the research process. In order to ensure children's participation, you need to build trust and respect with them, explaining the research and their role in it. You should also be sure to provide opportunities for children to ask questions and explain any aspects of the research that they don't understand or would like more information about. Below you will find examples of useful phrases that you may say to children during the learning assessment.

#### Communication

It is crucial that children understand the purpose of the research and the basis for their informed consent (see below). You need to make sure the children can understand the explanation you give.

All consent and learning assessment questions have been written in clear and simple language that children can understand. You should follow the script provided.

At the same time remember that communication is about more than language. For example, the way you react to children's responses can make children feel happy or upset. You should be careful not to convey responses or use body language that will make children feel that they have done something wrong.

#### Guidance note 1: Do No Harm

"DO NO HARM" refers to the importance of ensuring that research supports respondents' safety and well-being. Children may experience harm from research in different ways. This harm may be unintended which is why it is important to pay attention to the ways you ask questions as well as children's reactions to questions. In the case of the learning assessment for example the ways in which you react to children's responses may leave them feeling stigmatized or humiliated if they do not know the answer to a question. You can reduce these feelings by reassuring the children that she or he is doing a good job and that it does not matter whether she or he does or does not know answers to the different questions.

### Informed consent with children

When conducting research with children you must first obtain informed consent from parents. The researcher who is conducting the household survey will ask for this permission from the responsible adult in the household. However, to proceed with the learning assessment you must also request the assent of the child. As is the case for adults, children also have the right to refuse participation at any time.

In order for a research participant to provide informed consent they must be fully informed about the research and understand it's purpose. As already discussed this may require that you adjust your language to explain to children the objectives of the learning assessment in a way that makes sense to them. The box below provides a script you can use to explain the research to the child.

#### **EXPLAINING THE RESEARCH TO CHILDREN**

To explain the learning assessment to the children taking it, tell them that you want to play a short game to understand how much they have learned at home or at school.

If either the parent / caregiver or child does not provide their consent, the learning assessment cannot be carried out.

Parent / Caregiver	Child's response	Learning assessment
response		
Agrees	Agrees	✓ proceed with the assessment as both the
		caregiver and children provide their consent
Agrees	Disagrees	x assessment cannot go ahead without the
		consent of the child
Disagrees	Disagrees	x assessment cannot go ahead without the
		consent of the parent and child

It is also important to remember that informed consent is not something that occurs at a single moment. As with adults, children must also understand that they can withdraw from the research at any time. Since children may be less willing to verbally express their discontent or discomfort you need to be especially attentive to how they may be feeling.

## Guidance note 2: researcher reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity is an important skill, especially when working with children. Being reflexive means you are aware of the environment around you and how it may affect a child. It also means being aware of how you may affect a child you are interacting with and how the child is feeling. If the child appears uncomfortable or upset then you must adapt to the situation to make the child feel more comfortable, confident and happy. The following advice can be used to make sure you are a reflexive enumerator:

- i) **Provide children with opportunities to vocalize their feelings** about participation in this research and ensure that they feel comfortable to end their participation at any time.
- ii) Listen to the child's responses for signs of distress. If a child says they are upset you should respond to this. This may include reassuring them that this is a not a test, that their participation is helping other children and schools in Afghanistan, and that their answers are confidential. If the child is still visibly upset then you should end the assessment.
- iii) Never react with frustration, anger, or impatience to children's answers or inability to answer. You should remain calm and positive throughout the interview providing words of encouragement as the child moves from one question to the next (see section on useful phrases).
- iv) Pay attention to children's body language and non-verbal reactions for signs of distress. This may include shifting around nervously, looking the other way or long periods of silence. If you notice the child doing any of these things, take the time to check in with the child and reassure and encourage them.

# Working with parents and caregivers

You may not be able to conduct the learning assessment in the absence of the child's parent / caregiver or other family members. If possible and appropriate, you should encourage parents or other family members to stay in a neighboring room or at some distance from the child. You should also ask observing parents or family members to remain silent during the assessment.

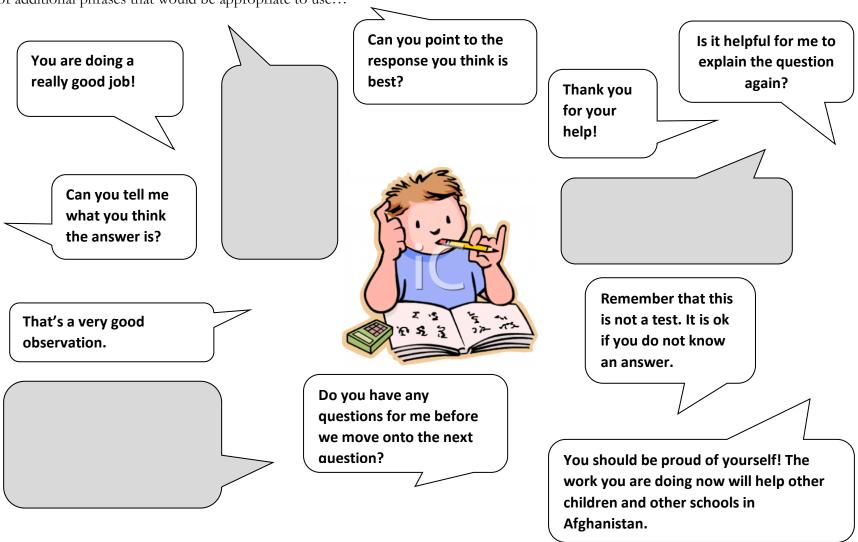
Despite these requests, parents or other family members may try to intervene. They may pressure the child to continue, point out correct answers to the child, or admonish the child if the child gets a question incorrect. This is a problem as it can cause the child distress or invalidate the results.

- Prior to beginning the assessment, explain clearly to the parent / caregiver that this is not a test and that the most important thing is that you are able to assess the responses of the child.
- Encourage the adults to sit out of view of the question cards, to limit their ability to provide answers.
- Use the child's name when asking a question.
- Maintain a direct eye contact with the child rather than the adult(s) in the room.

In cases where parents do intervene, you should gently remind them this is not a test. You can tell them that whether or not the child gets the answers correct will have no impact on his or her schooling. Politely reiterate the importance of having the child's responses only. Make sure that you are polite and respectful whenever you speak with the parent.

# Useful phrases

The following are examples of things you can say to children to encourage them during the learning assessment. Spend some time thinking of additional phrases that would be appropriate to use...



## Setting up the test

You will be provided with three tools to implement the learning assessment:

- i. A phone to time the duration of each question.
- ii. The survey tool, which includes space to record the answers and instructions for marking each question.
- iii. A set of show cards prepared for each question. You will show these to the child during the assessment.

It is important to set up the space for the learning assessment in a way that allows you to use each of the tools appropriately.

The survey tool is for your use only. Since it contains the answers to each question you should be careful to keep the survey tool out of sight of the child and the parent (though ideally the parent will already be sitting some distance from the child). For example, if you are sitting on the floor next to the child, you should put the tool off to the side and face down when you are not using it. When marking answers, try to hold the tool close to your body or out of sight of the child and the parent.

The timer should also be managed discreetly. If possible, you should place it on the opposite side from the child so that it can be kept out of the child and will not so distract them.

The show cards should be placed directly in from of the child, since each question asks the child to point look at or point to answers on the show card.

## Reading questions

Each child between ages 6-13 in each household will be administered a separate learning assessment. You should use a separate answer form for each child. As the surveyor administering the assessment you will be required both to ask the questions and keep time for each question.

If, at any point during the test, the child asks for a question to be repeated, you may repeat the question once. No question should be repeated more than once. If the child asks for the question to be repeated a second time, you should say, 'why don't we try a different question instead?' and move on to the next question. The question that the child asked to be repeated twice should be marked as 3 'Not attempted.'

If, at any point during the test, the child asks to know the answer to a question, you should explain to the child that, for the moment you should move on to the next question so that the game is not interrupted. However, any question can be discussed after the game is over.

#### **Timing**

Unless otherwise stated, most questions require that you provide the child with 15 seconds to answer (a few questions instruct you to wait 30 seconds or 1 minute). To keep time, you should leave the timer on your phone running. Make sure to put the phone in a place where you can see it, but it is not visible to the child. You do not need to keep track of the time precisely, but should generally make sure that you move on to the next sub-question when the time runs out. If this happens, reassure the child that she or he has not done anything wrong and there is no problem. If the child does not provide any answer within the allotted time then you should mark down that the question was not attempted.

## **Recording answers**

You should ask each question exactly as it is written and as the instructions stipulate and mark each answer as correct, incorrect, or not attempted, according to the guidelines below. You should carefully read the instructions for each question and memorize them before conducting the tests.

If, when answering the question, the child gives one answer and then immediately changes his/her mind and gives a different answer, you should mark the second (last) answer given, regardless of whether the answer is correct or incorrect.

Instructions for the two main types of answer options are provided in the table below.

	ANSWER TYPE	EXPLANATION
	up the total number of correct, incorrect, and not	letters or numbers along a row or to count the number of words in a phrase you will be asked to count attempted (Q1, Q5, and Q9). You should fill in the number applicable to each response category. The number of responses possible for that row (in Q1 and Q5, 10 responses are possible; in Q9 the number
E ONE	1. Total Correct	This should equal the total number of letters or numbers in the row that a child attempted to answer and for which they provided the right response (as indicated on the survey tool). These are marked with a circle.
ANSWER TYPE ONE	2. Total Incorrect	This should equal the total number of letters or numbers in the row that a child attempted to answer but provided the wrong response for. These are marked with an "X".
ANSWE	3. Total Not-attempted	Count up the total number of letters or numbers that the child did not attempt to answer. If they were silent or passed over a letter or number without offering an answer then you should mark it as not attempted. These are marked with a "/".
	External help	If at any point a third person helps the child by pointing to or verbalizing an answer you must note this down here. Mark "1 Yes" if the child received external help. Mark "2 No" if the child did not.
0/	question. You are required to note if the question	ittern of images and numbers on it. Unless otherwise noted, the child is given 15 seconds to answer the was answered properly by selecting one of three main responses (1, 2 or 3 marked below). You will also in questions (such as Q10). In this case you should both add the answer provided by the child and circle
E TW	1. Correctly Identified	If the child provides the response marked on the survey sheet within the given time, you should circle this response.
ANSWER TYPE TWO	2. Incorrectly Identified	If the child provides a response within the given time but it is not the right one (as marked on the survey sheet), you should circle that they have incorrectly identified an answer.
ANSW	3. Not attempted	Use this option if the child does not provide any response to the question during the allotted time. A question should only be marked as "not attempted" if the child says that s/he does not know or gives no answer at all.

External help	If at any point a third person helps the child by pointing to or verbalizing an answer
	you must note this down here. Mark "1 Yes" if the child received external help. Mark
	"2 No" if the child did not.

#### If a Child Doesn't Know the Answer

When you are administering the Learning Assessment, you will come across children who do not know how to answer many of the questions. That is fine. However, if this happens, you should not help the child. You can encourage the child by saying general things like "you're doing a really good job!" or "that was a good try!" or "ok, let's try another one!" but you must not ever give an answer to the child or help the child. For counting, addition, or subtraction questions, you can suggest that the child use stones or sticks or fingers to help them, but you should not count along or help in any other way. For the reading questions, you can suggest that the child try to sound out the words, but he must sound out the words himself. You should not help by sounding out words or letters.

It is not a problem if the child says they don't know how to answer a question. Just tell the child something like "you're doing great! Let's try another question." In these cases, you do not need to wait the full 15 seconds for that question, but can immediately move on to the next question.

If the child gets the first few questions in the assessment wrong, please do not stop the assessment. If the child is calm and willing to keep going, you should continue the assessment until the end, even if he gets all of the questions wrong.

If a child gets a little frustrated because he cannot answer a question, you should wait for the time allotted by that question (usually 15 seconds). If the child does not give an answer in that time, the question should be marked as "Not Attempted" and you should try to move on to the next question.

If the child gets very frustrated or angry and does not want to continue the assessment, you should first try to encourage the child to continue. If, however, the child continues to refuse, you should not pressure him or her to continue. If this happens, please stop the interview and record the disposition on the contact sheet that corresponds with this situation. Please remember that the reason for stopping an assessment should be related to the child's mood, not to his ability to answer the questions correctly.

# **Survey Management Information**

## Part 1: Survey Data

### PART 1 AT A GLANCE...

This section of the survey comprises 29 questions (H1, E1, M1 to M22, and D1 to D3). It collects information on the child, their family and community demographics.

There are two multipart questions (M4 and M11).

Almost all of the questions in this section should be answered by observation only and may be completed BEFORE you approach the household.

NOTES	INSTRUCTIONS	QUESTION
	<b>☆</b> To be completed by your supervisor	H1. Household packet number
	<ul><li>Write in the response provided.</li><li>Observation only</li></ul>	E1. Enumeration ID
	To be taken from E1 in the Household Survey Management Section.	
	<ul><li>Write in the response provided.</li><li>Observation only</li></ul>	M1. Child Line Number
	To be copied from the child's line number on the Household Survey roster.	
	To be completed by ACSOR prior to fieldwork.	M2. Wave Number
	Observation only. Complete before approaching household.  Select response from list provided	M3. Region
	To be completed by ACSOR prior to fieldwork.	M4a. Sampling Point/ District Where the Interview Was Completed
	Copy the household GPS coordinates from the Household Survey Management Section.	M4b. Household GPS Coordinates
	<ul> <li>Observation only. Complete before approaching household.</li> <li>✓ Select response from list provided</li> </ul>	M5. Geographic Code
	The only geographic code you should use is 1. Villages.	
	<ul> <li>Observation only. Complete before approaching household.</li> <li>✓ Select response from list provided</li> </ul>	M6. Province
	The only provinces you should mark are 2. Kapisa, 3. Parwan, 24. Herat, 31. Ghor, 32. Bamiyan, or 34. Daykundi.	

	Observation only. Complete before approaching household. Select response from list provided.	M7. Year of interview
	record the year (2017). Do not record the year according to the Afghan calendar.  Observation only. Complete before approaching household.	M8. Month of interview
	Select response from list provided.	
0	Observation only. Complete before approaching household.	M9. Date of interview
S 🗹	7 1 11 8	M10. Day of week of interview
a.	Observation only. Complete before approaching household.	M11. (multipart question – 3 parts)  a. Team ID
b.	Observation only. Complete before approaching household.	<ul><li>b. Interviewer Code</li><li>c. Gender of the interviewer</li></ul>
C.	<ul> <li>Observation only. Complete before approaching household.</li> <li>☑ Select response from list provided.</li> </ul>	
S ☑	,	M12. Interview completed on the
Please the inte	select whether you had to visit the household 1, 2 or 3 times in order to complete rview.	
8	Observation only. Complete before approaching household.	M13. Supervisor code
	Observation only. Write in the response provided.	M14. Record Time (using 24 hour clock) interview began
Record	the time starting from when Q1 — the first question in Section 1 — is asked.	

Observation only.  Write in the response provided.  After you finished the last question asked of the respondent (Q10d), please record the	M15. Record Time (using 24 hour clock) interview ended
time. If the respondent ends the interview early, please record the time when the respondent stated that s/he no longer wished to continue. You should fill in all four data spaces.	
Observation only  Write in the response provided.	M16. Record the length of the interview in minutes
To be completed by ACSOR prior to fieldwork.	M17. Date Formatted Field.
<b>★</b> To be completed by ACSOR after fieldwork.	M18. Keypuncher code
<ul><li>Observation only</li><li>✓ Select response from list provided.</li></ul>	M19. Language of the interview
★ To be completed by ACSOR after fieldwork	M20. Coder code
<ul><li>Observation only</li><li>✓ Select response from list provided.</li></ul>	M21. Language of the Questionnaire
<ul><li>Observation only</li><li>✓ Select response from list provided.</li></ul>	M22. Was a parent or other adult present during the learning assessment?
<ul><li>Write in the response provided.</li><li>Observation only</li></ul>	<b>D1.</b> Child's name
This information should be transferred from the Child Roster in the Household Questionnaire.	
Observation only	D2. Child's gender

☑ Select response from list provided.	
This information should be transferred from the Child Roster in the Household Questionnaire.	
<ul><li>Write in the response provided.</li><li>Observation only</li></ul>	D3. Child's age
This information should be transferred from the Child Roster in the Household Questionnaire.	

# **Part 2: Greetings and Introductions / Consent**

### PART 2 AT A GLANCE...

This section sets the tone for the rest of the interview. It also includes the script you need to read in order to obtain informed consent. The script itself is provided in Annex 2.

You must read the script provided in Part 2 for greetings and introduction and consent word for word.

NOTES	INSTRUCTIONS	SECTION
	Read the script provided out loud  I am [NAME]. Let me tell you why we are here today. We are trying to learn more about how children like you learn. If it is OK with you, I would like to play a short educational game with you, but you do not have to play if you don't want to.  I am going to ask you to count, read numbers, add, subtract, read letters and words, and read a short story aloud. This is NOT a test and we will not share your answers with anyone else.  We will start with a few questions about you, and then we will do the math and reading game. For each question, I will read you the instructions. You should give the answer that fits best. You can ask me anytime if you don't understand the question. I will record your answer exactly as you tell it to me. Once again, you do not have to participate if you do not want to. Once we begin, if you don't want to answer a question, that's OK.	Greeting and Introduction
	Consent 1: Do you understand? Are you ready to get started? (Mark only one answer)  1. Yes (Continue to Consent 2)  2. No (End interview and start interview with next child on new questionnaire. If this is the last child to be interviewed, end the interview and start to interview next house.)  CHILD DOES NOT UNDERSTAND: If the child does not understand, ask him or her what she or he does not understand and answer his or her questions.  CHILD DECLINES CONSENT: If the child disagrees thank them for their time and move on to the next household.	Consent 1 (child consent): Do you understand? Are you ready to get started?

<b>CHILD AGREES:</b> If the child provides their consent to participate in the survey you should thank them and confirm that the head of household also provided consent for the child's participation.	
Consent 2: (Confirm from the household questionnaire that the head of household provided consent to interview its children. Mark only one answer.)  a. Yes (Continue to P1)  b. No (Say thank you and end interview. Start interview with the next child. If this is the last child in the household, end the interview and start the interview with the next house.)	Consent 2 (adult consent): Confirm from the household questionnaire that the head of household provided consent to interview the children.

# **Learning Assessment**

#### LEARNING ASSESSMENT AT A GLANCE...

The learning assessment consists of three sections:

Section I: Practice questions - 2 questions (P1 and P2)

Section II: Math - 4 multipart questions (Q1a-Q1e, Q2a-2gg, Q3a-Q3jj, and Q4a- Q4j)

Section III: Reading - 6 multipart questions (Q5a-Q5j, Q6a-Q6c, Q7a-Q7c, Q8a-Q8c,

Q9a-Q9d, Q10a-Q10d)

The learning assessment tool includes detailed instructions for how to ask, time, and mark each question. Please make sure that you are extremely familiar with the instructions provided for each question. You should also be familiar with all answers.

**X** This section includes skip patterns.

The Q2 series has skip patterns. Make sure that you follow these as instructed.

SECTION I: PRACTICE QUESTIONS		
NOTES	INSTRUCTIONS	QUESTION
	Read the script provided	P1 and P2. Practice Questions
	<b>READ:</b> "Before we begin the game, let's try two practice questions. If you don't understand the instructions or the question, ask me and I will explain it to you. Are you ready to try a practice question?"	Questions
	SECTION II: MATH ASSESSMENT	
NOTES	INSTRUCTIONS	QUESTION
	<ul><li>➢ Write in the response provided.</li><li>☑ Select response from list provided.</li></ul>	Q1. Reading Numbers
	Be sure to know and carefully follow the instructions for marking each number as correct, incorrect, or not attempted.	
	You may move on to the next question <b>either</b> after the child gets four consecutive numbers wrong <b>or</b> one minute has passed.	
	When you tally up the total letters read correctly, incorrectly, or not attempted, the number you get should equals 10.	
	<ul> <li>✓ Select response from list provided.</li> <li>✓ Response causes skip pattern</li> </ul>	Q2. Counting and Identifying Numbers
	Be aware of the skip patterns for this question.	
	✓ Select response from list provided.	Q3. Smallest and Largest Numbers
	You will use each Q3 show card twice.	
	For this question, you can encourage the child to use small objects, such as stones to help them count. However, the child must complete the addition or subtraction by him or herself. For example, you should not give them the correct number of stones to start and then take away the correct number of stones and ask the child to count	Q4. Addition and Subtraction

	how many remain. The child must correctly identify the starting number by him or		
herself and must also either add or take away the correct number on her/his own.  SECTION III: READING ASSESSMENT			
NOTES	INSTRUCTIONS	QUESTION	
	<ul><li>➢ Write in the response provided.</li><li>☑ Select response from list provided.</li></ul>	Q5. Reading Letters	
	Be sure to know and carefully follow the instructions for marking each number as correct, incorrect, or not attempted.		
	You may move on to the next question <b>either</b> after the child gets four consecutive numbers wrong <b>or</b> after one minute has passed.		
	When you tally up the total letters read correctly, incorrectly, or not attempted, the number you get should equal 10.		
	Select response from list provided.	Q6. Identifying Letters	
	Ask the child to point to the correct letter in the word.  Select response from list provided.	Q7. Reading Simple Words	
	Encourage the child to sound out the words. If the child correctly sounds out all consonants in a word, then you can mark the word as correct.	Q8. Reading Harder Words	
	You should not assist the child by helping him or her to sound out the words. He or she must sound out the words on his own in order for it to be counted as correct.		
	<ul> <li>➢ Write in the response provided.</li> <li>☑ Select response from list provided.</li> <li>☑ Read the script provided</li> </ul>	Q9. Reading a Story "Now I am going to show you a short story that I would like you to read aloud. When you	
	Encourage the child to sound out the words. If the child correctly sounds out all consonants in a word, then you can mark the word as correct.	are finished, we will talk a little about the story. Start reading here (Interviewer point to the first	
	You should not assist the child by helping him or her to sound out the words. He or she must sound out the words on his own in order for it to be counted as correct.	word). Are you ready to begin? Here we go."	

➣ Write in the response provided.	Q10. Reading
☑ Select response from list provided.	Comprehension
Read the script provided	"Now I am going to read you
	the story again and then ask
All children should be asked this question, even if they get Q9 wrong. Q10 starts	five questions about it. Think
with the interviewer rereading the paragraph from Q9, so even if the child cannot	about each question before
read the story himself, it is still be possible for him to answer the Q10 questions.	you give me the answer. Are
	you ready?"
Mark whether the child gets each answer correct. For each line, the total number of	

words is marked in the grey box on the instrument. When you tally up the total words read correctly, incorrectly, or not attempted, the number you get should be

equal to the total number written in the grey box.

NOTES