Overview of the Test of Early Reading Ability- Third Edition (TERA-3)

Alexis Saperstein

Houston Baptist University
OVERVIEW OF THE TERA-3

The Test of Early Reading Ability-Third Edition (TERA-3) is used to directly measure reading ability of young children ages 3-6 through 8-6. Originally published in 1981 by Dr. Kim Reid, Wayne Hresko, and Donald Hammill, the TERA is unique in that is does not assess reading readiness but rather their mastery of early developing skills (ProEd, 2015). Updates were made in 1989 and 2001 so examiners no longer have to prepare their own items that require the use of company logos and all pictures have been drawn in color to present a more appealing look to children (Reid, Hresko, & Hammill, 2001). This assessment tool was normed on national sample of 1,454 children in fifteen states. Reliability measures are in the .90 range, and validity measures, assessed using the Basic School Skills Inventory, were found to be in the .55 range (SEDL, 2015). The kit itself consists of an Examiner’s Manual, a Profile/Examiner Record Booklet for each of Forms A and B, and a Picture Book for each form. Six Scores are derived during this 30-45 minute test that aid in discovering and diagnosing a language disorder.

The TERA-3 looks at literacy skills across three major domains: Alphabet, Conventions, and Meaning. The alphabet subtest consists of twenty-nine items and measures knowledge of the alphabet and phonology. Tests items consist of counting phonemes and syllables and recognizing print displayed in various fonts. Readers who do well on alphabet subtest have a good grasp of letter-sound relationships and are proficient with decoding words. The knowledge tapped by this subtest is usually taught by parents and caregivers, or in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade (Hayward, Stewart, Phillips, Norris, & Lovell, 2008). Children who mispronounce or confuse letters will likely perform low on this subtest. In addition, the authors mention that struggling students may omit or add inaccurate sounds to words showing a deficit in their knowledge of the alphabetic principal (Academic Therapy Publication, 2015). The kindergarten student I administered this assessment to consistently missed one ‘long-tail’ letter within a three-letter
OVERVIEW OF THE TERA-3

sequence (/L/, /j/, /y/) and was unable to decipher a prompted word (east– student points to
down; down–student points to behind). This gave valuable insight into focused instruction on
letter forms and initial letter sounds.

Convention subtests consist of twenty-one items and measures a student’s knowledge of
arbitrary aspects of English print. The authors use the term ‘arbitrary’ because items change
depending on ethnic, cultural, or social settings. Children who do well on this subtest understand
concepts of print and are knowledgeable of basic text features (table of contents, index, and
glossary) and syntax. Successful students are able to decipher between words that have different
meanings and have an understanding that sentences can vary. Children who have difficulty with
this subtest may find print confusing, may overlook punctuation, and may not be able to navigate
easily through a book (Reid et al., 2001). The student I completed this assessment on scored
within the average range. He provided correct responses for his age range and struggled only
when reaching questions that involved the function of print (table of contents, index, and
glossary).

Meaning consists of thirty items that measure the construction of meaning from print
(PAR, 2012). Children who do well on the meaning subtests have been exposed to environmental
print and understand the meaning of signs, logos, and words in both figural and situational
contexts. Children use reading strategies to predict, read independently, and retell events.
Children who have difficulty on this subtest often miss the significance of a reading passage-
relying on word retrieval rather than constructing meaning. Students might also lose their place
when reading and have difficulty making connection to the material. This will cause students to
have difficulty correctly answering questions as well (Reid et al., 2001). The student I worked
OVERVIEW OF THE TERA-3

with was able to identify all common candies and simple one-syllable words based on initial letter sound but did not reach the story portion of the test which was expected for his age (5-8).

The TERA-3 is designed to address 5 main components: to identify children who are significantly below their peers in reading development, identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual children, document a child’s progress, serve as a measure in reading development research, and as an adjunct to other assessments (PAR, 2012). With this in mind, the TERA-3 yields six types of scores: raw scores, subtest standard scores, a quotient for the composite, percentiles, age equivalent, and grade equivalents. Raw scores, although not useful for making clinical interpretations, are calculated through initial assessment and can be used for research purposes (i.e., computing coorelational coefficients). Subtest standard scores result from the raw score and allow the examiner to make comparisons between subtest providing the clearest indication of a child’s performance (Academic Therapy Publication, 2015). In addition to making connections between subtest, composite quotients (the sum and conversion of the standard scores) allow examiners to make comparisons across tests with the same mean and standard deviation. For example, an overall Reading Quotient is computed using all three subtest scores and can be compared with most aptitude and school achievement tests with the same mean and standard deviation (Academic Therapy Publication, 2015). Percentiles are another useful score that represents the percentage of distribution that is equal to or below a particular score. Lastly, although the TERA-3 uses reading ages, they caution their use. With improvements in technology, software for scoring is now available from the publisher and can aid in the calculations (SEDL, 2015).

Currently, we do not use the TERA-3. We use a variety of assessments across grades to assess reading readiness and development. We use the Developmental Reading Assessment
OVERVIEW OF THE TERA-3

(DRA) to assess reading proficiency (K-5). The DRA is a formative reading assessment in which teachers are able to systemically observe, record, and evaluate changes in student reading. It helps us identify a student’s independent reading level, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension performance (Pearson Education, 2015b). We track their progress across the year by administering the DRA three times a year. We also conduct a running record with miscue analysis within the reading passage, allowing us to analyze application of learned reading strategies. Overall, the DRA is similar to the TERA-3 conventions section as kids respond to questions before and after reading a passage. In addition to the DRA, first grade and kindergarten use the Phonemic Awareness Skills Assessment retrieved from the Common Core State Standards link. Eight skills are assessed that reflect the phonology (alphabet) portion seen on the TERA. We also use Children’s Progress Academic Assessment through the ERBs. This is a diagnostic screening and allows for progress monitoring end of pre-kindergarten through second grade (ERB, 2014). We do not explicitly assess students in a similar way as subtest III (meaning) on the TERA-3. I am interested in bringing this assessment to our school as I think it will be helpful with assessing their mastery of essential developmental reading skills (3-6 to 5-6) especially since the DRA lacks useful information with nonreaders. The TERA-3 would be an easy solution as the authors do not identify a specific professional group needed to administer the test, but states that the examiners should have some formal training in assessment and practice administration at least three times (Pearson Education Incorporated, 2015a) - which criteria could be easily met with the experienced Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers.
OVERVIEW OF THE TERA-3

References


ERB (2014). Children’s Progress Academic Assessment. Retrieved from
https://www.erblearn.org/services/cpaa-overview

review: Test of early reading ability (TERA-3). Language, Phonological Awareness, and
Reading Test Directory (pp. 1-6). Edmonton, AB: Canadian Centre for Research on


from http://www.pearsonclinical.com/psychology/qualifications.html

PLUS (DRA2+). Retrieved from
(http://www.pearsonschool.com/index.cfm?locator=PSZw5u&PMDbSiteId=2781&PMD
bSolutionId=6724&PMDbSubSolutionId=&PMDbCategoryId=3289&PMDbSubCategor
yId=28139&PMDbSubjectAreaId=&PMDbProgramId=23661

OVERVIEW OF THE TERA-3
