The Early Screening Inventory–Revised (Meisels, Marsden, Wiske, & Henderson, 1997) is a developmental screening test that provides a quick assessment of a child's development of visual–motor/adaptive, language and cognition, and gross-motor skills and abilities. It is not an intelligence test, nor is it intended for use in making decisions about school readiness. The test is the sixth revision of a measure first introduced in 1975 as the Eliot–Pearson Screening Inventory (Meisels & Wiske, 1975). In 1983 the test was renamed the Early Screening Inventory; it has undergone five major revisions prior to this edition.

The ESI-R is available in two forms. The preschool version (ESI-P) is intended for use with children from their third birthday until they become four and one-half years old. The kindergarten version (ESI-K) is designed to screen children 4 years, 5 months, 16 days to 6 years of age. The authors indicate that the purpose of the test is to identify children who may need special education services in order to perform successfully in school. The test is available in both English and Spanish versions.

Scores and Norms

The ESI-R does not provide scores per sé. Rather, it provides three classifications: OK, Rescreen, and Refer. A score in the Refer range is said to suggest the possibility of a delay or disorder in the child's potential for acquiring knowledge.
The ESI-K and ESI-P were normed separately. In norming the ESI-K, the authors collected data on 5,034 children enrolled in 60 classrooms in 10 states. Twenty of these classrooms were Head Start programs, 26 were public school programs, and the remainder were other kinds of programs. A stratified sample was not used. Although demographic characteristics of the students were recorded and are reported in the manual, these data are not compared to national population characteristics. Because sufficient information is not provided, it is impossible to judge the extent to which the sample is representative of the population. The ESI-P was standardized on 974 children selected from 16 sites, of which 10 were Head Start programs. Again, the demographic characteristics of the sample are reported in the manual, but no comparison to national norms is provided.

Reliability

Interrater reliability for the ESI-K is reported to be .97, indicating excellent agreement among raters in their evaluations of student performance. Test–retest reliability coefficients for 174 children ranged from .79 to .84. Reliabilities are sufficient for screening, the intended use of this measure. Reliability data on the ESI-P are on so few children (\(N = 5\)) that the coefficients must be disregarded.

Validity
The authors assessed the predictive validity of the ESI-K on a sample of 251 children who were given the McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities seven months after being given the ESI-K. A correlation of .73 was obtained. The same coefficient was obtained for 130 children who were given the ESI-P and the McCarthy. The authors also examined the extent to which the same diagnostic decision (at risk/refer) was reached using the two scales. It was demonstrated that both scales identify students who are at risk, although the ESI-P and ESI-K overrefer 18 to 20 percent of the sample.

Summary

The ESI-R is a brief developmental screening instrument that is administered in 15 to 20 minutes to children 3 to 6 years of age. The test provides information about a child's development of visual–motor/adaptive, language and cognition, and gross-motor skills. We were unable to ascertain the extent to which the normative sample is representative of the U.S. population, and evidence for reliability and validity is limited.