NSS SCORING GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The *Narrative Scoring Scheme* (NSS) is an assessment tool that provides an index of the student's ability to produce a coherent narrative. It was developed to create a more objective narrative structure scoring system and is based on an earlier version, Rubric for Completing a Story Grammar Analysis, developed by the Madison Metropolitan School District SALT working group, 1998, following the work of Stein and Glenn, 1979; 1982. This scoring procedure combines many of the abstract categories of Story Grammar, adding features of cohesion, connecting events, rationale for characters' behavior and referencing. Each of the scoring categories has explicit examples to establish scoring criteria, reducing the abstractness of the story grammar categories.

Samples from the following SALT reference databases have all been coded for NSS:

- Narrative Story Retell, consisting of samples from typically-developing children in grades P, K, 1, 2, 3 and 4, ages 4;4 - 10;1, whose primary language is English.
- Bilingual Story Retell databases, consisting of Spanish and English samples from typically-developing bilingual children in grades K, 1, 2 and 3, ages 5;0 – 9;9, who are native Spanish-speakers learning English as a second language.

These databases can be utilized to compare a student's narrative skills to those of age-matched peers. Clinicians can compare individual characteristics of the NSS or the composite score using the database. The narrative retell task may be repeated to assess progress of story retell skills.

SCORING GUIDELINES

Assigning NSS Scores

The NSS is scored using a 0 - 5 point scale. 5 points are given for "proficient" use, 3 points for "emerging" or "inconsistent" use and 1 point for "immature" or "minimal" use. Scores of 2 and 4 are used for intermediate performance. Scores of zero (0) are given for poor performance and for a variety of child errors including telling the wrong story, conversing with the examiner, not completing/refusing the task, abandoned utterances, unintelligibility, and when target components of the NSS are imitated. The scores for each characteristic can be considered individually or combined into a total composite score (highest possible score being 35).

Description of NSS characteristics

1. Introduction: Scores are determined by the presence, absence, and qualitative depiction of character and setting components.
2. Character Development: Scores are based on the acknowledgement of characters and their significance throughout the story.
3. Mental States: Narratives are evaluated based on the vocabulary used to convey character emotions and thought processes. The frequency as well as the diversity of mental state words is considered. For example, if a story provides frequent opportunities to verbalize anger themes and a child marks each of these with "mad," he/she will not receive as high of a score as a child who explains one opportunity using "mad," another using "angry," another using "upset," and so on. Mental state words can be either adjectives (e.g., *sad, happy, scared*) or active cognitive-state words (e.g., *believe, know, remember*).
4. Referencing: Scores are given according to the consistent and accurate use of antecedents and clarifiers throughout the story. Student's use of correct pronouns and proper names should be considered in this score.
5. Conflict/Resolution: Scores are based on the presence/absence of conflicts and resolutions required to express the story as well as how thoroughly each is described.
6. Cohesion: The sequencing of, details given to, and transitions between each event are examined.
7. Conclusion: Scores are based on the conclusion of the final event as well as the wrap-up of the entire story.

NSS Scoring Rubric

Refer to the scoring rubric on page 4 for a guide on assigning scores for each of the NSS characteristics of a narrative.

Helpful Scoring Tips:

- Be familiar with the narrated story. It is recommended that the scorer have a copy of the story to reference while scoring.
- Print the narrative transcript.
- Read the transcript as fluidly/inclusively as possible, ignoring SALT transcription codes.
- Write comments and circle or flag key words/utterances such as mental state words or difficulty with referents and pronouns.
- For *each* characteristic, review the NSS before assigning a score. Read the criteria along the continuum of points. Determine what is present in the transcript and score accordingly. This will insure intra- and inter-rater reliability.
- Conflict/Resolution and Cohesion are story grammar elements which are distributed across the entire narrative. They do not occur at one static point within the story. The scoring of these characteristics must take into account the story as a whole.
- Conflict/Resolution (CR) is based on the presence of CRs necessary for telling a complete story as well as the clarity and richness in which these story elements are expressed. A child who is missing elemental conflicts and/or resolutions will receive a proportionately lower score than a child who narrates all conflicts and resolutions necessary for advancing that story. A child who expresses these CRs clearly and comprehensively receives a proportionately higher score than a child who narrates under-developed CRs.
- Frequently review what constitutes a score of 0 or NA. Explanations are given at the bottom of the NSS scoring rubric.
- Proficiency in assigning scores will develop with experience.

USING SALT TO ENTER NSS SCORES (SALT VERSION 2012)

The **Insert NSS Template** option within the Edit menu may be used to insert the NSS plus line template at the bottom of your transcript. Then type the individual scores after each label.

NSS Template	Example of NSS Scoring
+ Introduction:	+ Introduction: 3
+ CharacterDev:	+ CharacterDev: 2
+ MentalStates:	+ MentalStates: 2
+ Referencing:	+ Referencing: 2
+ ConflictRes:	+ ConflictRes: 1
+ Cohesion:	+ Cohesion: 3
+ Conclusion:	+ Conclusion: 2

ANALYZING THE NSS SCORES (SALT VERSION 2012)

The **Narrative Scoring Scheme** report selected from the Analyze menu lists each individual NSS score along with the composite score.

COMPARING YOUR NSS SCORES TO THE DATABASE SAMPLES (SALT VERSION 2012)

The **Narrative Scoring Scheme** report selected from the Database menu lists each individual NSS score along with the composite score. Scores are listed for your transcript and for the selected database samples.

TRYING IT OUT

On the last page of this guide there are examples of "good", "average", and "poor" narrative retells for stories contained in the SALT reference databases. These will provide examples of the scoring rationale.

Download the NSS practice transcripts from the SALT web site and compare your scores to those of our trained transcribers.

REFERENCES

Mayer, M. (1969). *Frog, where are you?* New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.

Miller, J., Andriacchi, K., DiVall-Rayan, J., Lien, P. (2003). Narrative Scoring Scheme.

Stein, N., & Glenn, C. (1979). An analysis of story comprehension in elementary school children. In R. Freedle (Ed.), *New directions in discourse processing* (pp. 53-120). Noorwood, NJ: Ablex.

Stein, N., & Glenn, C. (1982). Children's concept of time: The development of a story schema. In W.J. Friedman (Ed.), *The developmental psychology of time* (pp. 255-282). New York: Academic Press.

NSS SCORING RUBRIC

Characteristic	Proficient	Emerging	Minimal/Immature
Introduction	**1) Setting**: - States general place and provides some detail about the setting (e.g., reference to the time of the setting, daytime, bedtime, season). - Setting elements are stated at appropriate place in story. **2) Characters:** - Main characters are introduced with some description or detail provided.	**1) Setting:** - States general setting but provides no detail. - Description or elements of setting are given intermittently through story. - May provide description of specific element of setting (e.g., the frog is in the jar). **2) Characters:** - Characters of story are mentioned with no detail or description.	- Launches into story with no attempt to provide the setting.
Character Development	- Main character(s) and <u>all</u> supporting character(s) are mentioned. - Throughout story it is clear child can discriminate between main and supporting characters (e.g., more description of, emphasis upon main character(s)). - Child narrates in first person using character voice (e.g., "You get out of my tree", said the owl.).	- Both main and active supporting characters are mentioned. - Main characters are not clearly distinguished from supporting characters.	- Inconsistent mention of involved or active characters. - Character(s) necessary for advancing the plot are not present.
Mental States	- Mental states of main and supporting characters are expressed when necessary for plot development and advancement. - A variety of mental state words are used.	- Some use of evident mental state words to develop character(s).	- No use of mental state words to develop character(s).
Referencing	- Provides necessary antecedents to pronouns. - References are clear throughout story.	- Inconsistent use of referents/antecedents.	- Excessive use of pronouns. - No verbal clarifiers used. - Child is unaware listener is confused.
Conflict Resolution	- Clearly states all conflicts and resolutions critical to advancing the plot of the story.	- Under developed description of conflicts and resolutions critical to advancing the plot of the story. **OR** - Not all conflicts and resolutions critical to advancing the plot are present	- Random resolution(s) stated with no mention of cause or conflict. **OR** - Conflict mentioned without resolution. **OR** - Many conflicts and resolutions critical to advancing the plot are not present.
Cohesion	- Events follow a logical order. - Critical events are included while less emphasis is placed on minor events. - Smooth transitions are provided between events.	- Events follow a logical order. - Excessive detail or emphasis provided on minor events leading the listener astray. **OR** - Transitions to next event unclear. **OR** - Minimal detail given for critical events. **OR** - Equal emphasis on all events.	- No use of smooth transitions.
Conclusion	- Story is clearly wrapped up using general concluding statements such as "and they were together again happy as could be".	- Specific event is concluded, but no general statement made as to the conclusion of the whole story.	- Stops narrating and listener may need to ask if that is the end.

Scoring: Each characteristic receives a scaled score 0-5. Proficient characteristics=5, Emerging=3, Minimal/ Immature=1. Scores in between (e.g., 2, 4) are undefined, use judgement. Scores of 0, NA are defined below. A composite is scored by adding the total of the characteristic scores. Highest score=35.

A score of 0 is given for Child Errors (i.e., telling the wrong story, conversing with examiner, not completing/refusing task, using wrong language creating inability of scorer to comprehend story in target language, abandoned utterances, unintelligibility, poor performance, components of rubric are in imitation-only).

A score of NA (non-applicable) is given for Mechanical/Examiner/Operator Errors (i.e., interference from background noise, issues with recording (cut-offs, interruptions), examiner quitting before child does, examiner not following protocol, examiner asking overly specific or leading questions rather than open-ended questions or prompts).

NSS SCORING EXAMPLES

Characteristic	HIGH (Proficient Score 4-5)	MEDIUM (Emerging Score 2-3)	LOW (Minimal/Immature Score 0-1)
Introduction	**FWAY Introduction** "A little boy went out one day and caught a frog. He put the frog in a jar and stared at him when he got to his room again. The dog looked in the jar and saw the frog too. While the boy was sleeping the frog jumped down and ran out the window." **Note**: All three characters are mentioned. There is mention of the setting (boy's bedroom, the frog is in the jar). Events are ordered correctly. **PGHW Introduction** "In this story a little girl named Pookins, she always gets her own way. And she's used to it because probably her mom and dad don't really care."	**FWAY Introduction** "One morning Tom woke up. Tom was looking at his frog. At night the frog went out." **Note**: Minimal detail of characters and not all characters are mentioned. Setting is not mentioned **PGHW Introduction** "Pookins is a nice lady. But she always made faces."	**FWAY Introduction** "First the boy was looking at the frog." **Note**: Overall poor performance that lacks detail or specificity in set-up. **PGHW Introduction** "She was eating her x. And then she made faces." Note: Poor referencing, launches into story without set up.
Mental States*	**DDS Mental States** "On his way home he thought about if he should eat the mouse or not…The next day the fox came in looking very happy and in no pain at all… I would be honored said the fox… I forgot to mention, said Dr. DeSoto…"	**PGHW Mental States** "And she is crying. So she wants to get out." "She liked it." **APNF Mental States** (Score of three) " Then he met an angry rhinoceros… And then Fluffy started feeling bad"	No use of mental states words.
	*****The mental states characteristic encompasses mental states such as feelings (sad, angry, mad) but also "cognitive states" (thoughts of characters, emotional responses, etc.)		
Referencing	**DDS Referencing** "Dr. DeSoto said, hold on just a minute. He pulled his head back into the window and talked with his wife…" **Note:** Contains antecedent and uses adequate referencing for multiple characters	**DDS Referencing** "He looked out the window and saw a fox. He said, I can't help you. And then he was thinking, but my tooth aches." **Note:** Inconsistent use of referents. Unfamiliar listener would be confused.	**APNF Referencing** "And then he put on more shaving cream. Then he ate marshmallows. He stuck whip cream in feathers. Then he said I'm not fluffy. **Note:** Lack of antecedents to pronouns and diversity of referents