



For a speech-language pathologist, using digital assessments with real-time scoring speeds up the testing process.

Ron Casterlow, MA, CCC-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist

The Challenge

In 2016, Ron Casterlow, a speech-language pathologist, decided to open a private practice in order to administer speech-language evaluations for the Disability Determination Services (DDS) of North Carolina. Needing to buy testing kits, he started to do some research. "I got sticker shock when I realized that the paper kits were so expensive," he said. "So I did a little more digging."

When he read about Q-interactive® in a Pearson catalog, he was intrigued. With Q-interactive, a clinician can administer interactive assessments with a portable system that uses two iPads® connected via Bluetooth®. The clinician uses one iPad to access test instructions, score and record responses, and control visual stimuli. The examinee uses the other iPad to view and respond to stimuli.



Pearson

The cost of two of the paper kits Casterlow would have needed for his practice was approximately nine times the cost of a Q-interactive license, although he would incur additional costs for the digital subtests he used as well as for buying two iPads. However, when he considered the initial savings in purchasing a license, he decided to give the digital system a try.

A Digital Assessment Solution

Taking advantage of the Q-interactive 30-day trial, Casterlow used the digital system for the five trial evaluations he had to complete to be approved as a DDS provider. DDS requires providers to submit reports within 10 days from the day of the evaluation. Using the digital system, Casterlow was able to turn around the reports in one or two days.

He was impressed with the system. “Everything was very smooth and seamless. The kids seemed to really be attentive to the testing process,” he explained. Approved as a provider by the DDS, he decided to purchase a Q-interactive license for his practice, which he opened in June 2016.

On average, Casterlow administers 25 evaluations each month in his part-time practice. He uses Q-interactive to administer the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals®, Fifth Edition (CELF®-5) and the Goldman-Fristoe Test of Articulation–3 (GFTA™-3) when evaluating children age 5 and up, who make up approximately 90 percent of his practice. For adults, he uses the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition (PPVT™-4), as well as one paper test that is not yet available on the system.

In addition, Casterlow works as a speech-language pathologist for a school district in North Carolina, testing students in Pre-K through high school and providing speech therapy. The district’s speech-language pathologists use paper assessments, which has made the benefits of digital assessments clear to him.

FIGURE 1

Casterlow took advantage of the Q-interactive 30-day trial, and used the digital system for five trial evaluations.



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The Results

According to Casterlow, being able to generate data through real-time scoring is the biggest benefit of using digital assessments. Given his full schedule on the days he works in the district and the time needed to hand-score paper tests, he struggles to find the time. It can take him four or five days to complete an evaluation. Using digital assessments, he can complete the scoring in a day.

“We had a student in the school system who needed to be tested immediately—they needed the scores like yesterday,” Casterlow recounted. “So I volunteered to use my Q-interactive account to get it done, and I was able to turn that student’s scores around that day.”

The digital assessments also make the testing process more seamless. Using Q-interactive, Casterlow can easily set up the subtests he needs before he begins an evaluation. “With paper kits, I have to use little stickies and put them into the different sections so I can flip to them more quickly,” he remarked. “There’s a lot of flipping back and forth during a paper evaluation,” he noted. “Kids are sitting there waiting for me to find my beginning and ending point.”

Casterlow has observed that kids’ attention with Q-interactive is a lot better than with the paper kit. That’s in part because of the seamlessness of the testing process, but also because the use of iPads increases their engagement. “When they find out they’re going to get to use one of my iPads, they just light up,” he commented.

Casterlow has seen that students’ increased engagement helps them focus during assessments. When he administers certain types of paper subtests for the CELF in his work for the district, some students have trouble following along. “But what I found with Q-interactive is that because they are more engaged, they are more attentive, and then they’re able to follow along a lot easier when it comes to those types of subtests that require them to point to or touch different items,” he explained.

According to Casterlow, digital assessments also help students with attention and behavior issues focus during tests. When he evaluates students in the district who struggle with such issues, they sometimes have difficulty sitting through a test. In such instances, he has wished he could have used Q-interactive because he has seen the difference digital assessments make.

“Q-interactive has been a godsend. I can get the evaluations scored and the reports written in the limited time that I have.”

—Ron Casterlow, MA, CCC-SLP,
Speech-Language Pathologist

“I had a couple of parents in my private practice who told me before the testing began that their child would have difficulty remaining still and calm enough to go through the evaluation. And they were surprised at the end of the evaluation that their child actually maintained attention all the way through the evaluation without much difficulty. And I really think that I can attribute that to the fact that the children were using the iPad and not sitting there with the paper kit.”

Recently, Casterlow shared the benefits of using digital assessments in his private practice with another speech-language pathologist in the school district. He recalled, “We thought it would be wonderful if our [district] would invest in them.”

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To learn more about the benefits of digital assessments, visit [PearsonAssessments.com/SLPTrial](https://www.pearsonassessments.com/SLPTrial)