Advanced Interpretation of the DECA-P2

Comparisons Across Raters

Comparison of DECA-P2 *T*-scores on the same child, on the same scale, but obtained from different raters (for example, a parent and a teacher) can be very useful. Such comparisons can demonstrate the consistency of the child's behavior across environments and adults or can show how the child's behavior differs under various circumstances. This information can help the DECA-P2 user more fully understand the child's behavior as seen by different raters and plan more effective strategies for strengthening social and emotional competencies within these different contexts.

The user must first determine whether the variation between the raters' scores exceeds the amount that would be expected due to chance (e.g., measurement error). Table 5.3 provides the differences needed for significance at the 95% level of significance when comparing ratings on the same scale obtained from different raters. Table 5.3 is used to compare the ratings obtained from two parents, from two teachers, or from a parent and a teacher. The values in these tables are based on the standard error of the difference between the scores, calculated using the formula provided by Anastasi and Urbina (1997), a *z* value of 1.96 for the 95% level of significance, and the standard errors of measurement provided in this manual in Table 3.2.

Table 5.3

Differences Required for Significance When Comparing DECA-P2 *T*-Scores Between Raters at the 95% Level of Significance

	Initiative	Self-Regulation	Attachment/Relationships	Total Protective Factors	Behavioral Concerns
Parent vs Parent	10	9	13	8	12
Teacher vs Teacher	8	7	11	10	10
Parent vs Teacher	9	8	12	9	11

To use this table, first find the row of the table for the appropriate pair of raters (parent vs. parent, teacher vs. teacher, or parent vs. teacher). Then, reading to the right, find the column for the scale that is being compared. To be significant, the difference between the two raters' *T*-scores on this scale must be equal to or greater than the tabled value.

For example, if a mother and father both rate the same child and the Total Protective Factors scale *T*-score is 62 when rated by the mother and 54 when rated by the father, the 8-point difference is compared to the value in Table 5.3. In this example, the difference is significant (Table 5.3 shows that a difference of 8 or more points is needed). This result would be interpreted as meaning that the mother and father provided reliably different ratings. The next step would be to gain an understanding of this difference within the context of the interactions between the child and each parent. For instance, do the parents' ratings differ because they see the child at different times of the day when the child's behavior may be very different? This same type of comparison may be made using the ratings obtained from two different teachers or a parent and a teacher. A rater comparison worksheet is provided online at www.CenterForResilientChildren.org to facilitate this analysis.

Pretest–Posttest Comparisons

Changes in a child's *T*-scores over time can also be evaluated when a period of at least 4 weeks between the ratings has elapsed, so that the latter rating represents a new sample of behaviors. Whenever possible, the same rater should be used for both the pretest and the posttest rating. It is essential, however, that the same type of rater (parent or teacher) be used at both administrations.

The statistical significance of the difference between pretest and posttest scores can be determined using the method described by Atkinson (1991). This approach involves the comparison of the obtained posttest score with a range of scores that represents the variability expected by both regression to the mean and measurement error based on the pretest score. To obtain the