child is delayed, a more thorough examination could include criterion-referenced tests. Criterion-referenced tests assess a child’s task performance in relation to specific task criteria. Although criterion-referenced tests are helpful, reports must clearly state the limitations of the test results. Table 5-4 provides a helpful comparison of norm-referenced vs criterion-referenced tests.\(^7\)

Often standardized assessments target discrete skills that may not translate into the overall skills needed by the child to successfully function in the home, school, and other social environments. Children from linguistically and culturally diverse groups benefit from alternate methods of assessment. Even for children who are within the mainstream culture, standardized assessments may reveal mainly what a child does not know and not necessarily what a child knows or is capable of learning. Dynamic assessment (DA), designed using Vygotsky’s model of cognitive development, can provide information about the child’s ability to respond to new learning experiences, revealing the child’s potential to learn.\(^8,9\) DA has also been shown to be a sensitive measure for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.\(^10\) Assessments can be devised to reveal important aspects of learning, including the child’s (1) ease at learning a new skill, (2) ability to focus attention on a task, (3) ability to complete a task, (4) ability to transfer skills to new tasks, (5) persistence, (6) enthusiasm, (7) planning skills, and (8) self-regulation.

Dynamic assessments are generally developed using a test-teach-retest model, using graduated prompting to see how much support the child requires to learn a new skill. With this mediated learning experience (MLE), the examiner can judge how much effort the child and teacher must expend for the child to learn a new task.\(^11\) If the child learns a new skill easily, possibly more exposure is needed, not necessarily intervention. However, if intervention is indicated, the learning strategies and prompts that are most effective when working with the child can be identified.\(^10,11\)