



Evaluation: What Does It Mean for Your Child?

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What is an evaluation?

Evaluation is the process for determining whether a child has a disability and needs special education and related services. It's the first step in developing an educational program that will help the child learn. A full and individual initial evaluation must be done before the initial provision of any special education or related services to a child with a disability, and students must be reevaluated at least once every three years.

Evaluation involves gathering information from a variety of sources about a child's functioning and development in all areas of suspected disability, including information provided by the parent. The evaluation may look at cognitive, behavioral, physical, and developmental factors, as well as other areas. All this information is used to determine the child's educational needs.

Why have an evaluation?

A full and individual educational evaluation serves many important purposes:

- 1. Identification.** It can identify children who have delays or learning problems and may need special education and related services as a result.
- 2. Eligibility.** It can determine whether your child is a child with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and qualifies for special education and related services.
- 3. Planning an Individualized Education Program (IEP).** It provides information that can help you and the school develop an appropriate IEP for your child.
- 4. Instructional strategies.** It can help determine what strategies may be most effective in helping your child learn.
- 5. Measuring progress.** It establishes a baseline for measuring your child's educational progress.

The evaluation process establishes a foundation for developing an appropriate educational program. The public agency must provide a copy of the evaluation report and the documentation of determination of eligibility to the parent. Even if the evaluation results show that

your child does *not* need special education and related services, the information may still be used to help your child in a regular education program.

What measures are used to evaluate a child?

No single test may be used as the sole measure for determining whether a child has a disability or for determining an appropriate educational program for your child. Both formal and informal tests and other evaluation measures are important in determining the special education and related services your child needs.

Testing measures a child's ability or performance by scoring the child's responses to a set of questions or tasks. It provides a snapshot of a child and the child's performance on a particular day. Formal test data is useful in predicting how well a child might be expected to perform in school. It also provides information about unique learning needs.

Other measures of a child's growth and development, such as observation or interviews with parents and others who know the child, provide vital information on how the child functions in different settings and circumstances.

The school must conduct a full and individual evaluation consistent with the IDEA that uses information from diverse sources, including formal and informal data. Tests are important, but evaluation also includes other types of information such as:

- medical information
- comparisons of the child's progress to typical expectations of child development
- observations of how the child functions in school, at home, or in the community
- interviews with parents and school staff

As a parent, you have a wealth of information about the development and needs of your child. When combined with the results of tests and other evaluation materials, this information can be used to make decisions about your child's appropriate educational program.



Special Education EVALUATION

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Before your child receives special education services, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that he or she have an evaluation. An evaluation includes information from parents, any special medical concerns, interviews with parents and school staff, and may include specific tests. The results of an evaluation will be used to determine if your child needs special education and related services help in school. You must give your consent **in writing** before the first evaluation can take place. The evaluation:

- must be done by trained and knowledgeable persons
- must be in all areas related to the suspected disability
- is more than just one test or assessment procedure
- must be in your child's native language unless clearly not possible to do so
- must not discriminate against your child

Some questions parents can ask the school staff about evaluation are:

1. Why do you want to evaluate my child?
2. What do you think you may find from the evaluation?
3. What kinds of test will you give?
4. In what areas will my child be tested?
5. Will the tests you use discriminate against my child based on: Race? Culture? Disability? Use of language?
6. How do you know that the tests do or do not discriminate?
7. What will happen if my child is NOT evaluated? Will he or she still get some help for the problems you identify?
8. By what date will you give me a written copy of the evaluation results?
9. What steps should I take if I do not agree with the evaluation results?

If your child has behavior problems at school, these questions may be helpful:

1. Does my child need a "functional behavioral assessment?" Why or why not? (a functional behavioral assessment looks at *why* a child is having behavior problems in school)
2. What are you doing to help my child learn new behavior skills?

If you disagree with the school district's evaluation results, you have a right to:

- have someone outside the school system evaluate your child {this is called an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)}
- help select the person or persons who will do the testing
- have the testing done at no cost to you or your family*

**The school district must either have your child evaluated at no cost to you, or show, at a hearing, that its evaluation is appropriate.*