

If you are interested in possibly pursuing Psycho-Educational Testing for your child, please review the following document for more information about the process and benefits of understanding your child's learning profile.

Psycho-Educational Testing

Posted by Penny Hays on November 26, 2013 in [Education](#)



Psycho-Educational testing is a confusing topic for many parents. This guide helps answer questions about what Psycho-Educational testing is and what are the steps involved in the testing process.

What is a Psycho-Educational Evaluation?

A Psycho-educational evaluation is a process of using different tests, interviews, observations, and analysis of background information and reports to determine an individual's learning strengths and weaknesses. A Psycho-educational evaluation is often recommended when a student struggles to work up to their full potential in some aspect of learning, such as reading, writing, arithmetic, memory, attention, organizational skills, time management issues, and processing speed. The evaluation should be tailored to each individual and used to answer the unique questions about that person's learning profile.

Why test?

Since many learning issues have complex cause and effect relationships, they can be easily misdiagnosed without a comprehensive evaluation. Learning differences and behavioral/emotional issues have many components that may affect a student's learning. Knowing how an individual learns, and what his strengths and weaknesses are will help make the best choices for intervention and therapies. The results from testing can also help students, parents and educators avoid wasting time with strategies that are ineffective. In many cases, psycho-educational evaluations are a necessary step for admission to programs in schools designed to help students with academic concerns even at the college or university level. Additionally, physicians often require a complete evaluation before prescribing medications that may have a positive impact on a student's learning.

Furthermore, a psycho-educational evaluation is a necessary component to justify accommodations on standardized tests such as the SSAT, PSAT, AP exams, SAT, and ACT.

The components of a psycho-educational evaluation

There are four basic components of our psycho-educational evaluations:

- Intellectual - Intelligence or ability testing gives a picture of the student's overall ability so expectations can be realistic and effective.
- Academic achievement - The basics of learning: reading, writing, arithmetic and their subcomponents are thoroughly examined through individually administered academic achievement tests. For younger children it often means looking at prerequisite skills.
- Information processing - This is often the most useful and informative part of the evaluation: attempting to answer why a student is having difficulty and what to do about it. Areas often covered are: visual, auditory and tactile processing, memory, attention span and executive functioning.
- Social-emotional - Here the focus is on emotional issues such as depression and anxiety, as well as behavioral concerns that often co-exist in students with academic issues.

The results of the individual tests are then compiled and analyzed. Recommendations and strategies are then provided in a detailed written report.

The testing process

Below are the 5 main steps generally performed in a Psycho-educational evaluation.

1. Initial consultation - Parents and professionals meet to gather background and history information, address questions, and decide which tests are relevant. Rating scales are given for parents and teachers to complete.
2. Testing Sessions - Testing will generally take from two to three sessions, depending on the referral concerns and the extensiveness of the evaluation requested. Tests are administered on an individual basis, not in a group setting.
3. Test scoring and interpretation - The tests are scored and integrated with questionnaires and rating scales completed by the student, parents and teachers. Patterns and consistencies are gleaned from these multiple sources in order to develop a learning profile.
4. Feedback session - The information obtained including strengths and weaknesses will be discussed. Specific strategies that address the concerns will be given. A written report covering all results is provided within a few weeks.
5. Follow-up consultation - Follow-up meetings may be helpful. The meetings may include reviewing results with school personnel or follow-up appointments months later to evaluate progress. Meeting with older children and teenagers directly to review results can also be useful in making sure the child feels a part of the process.

Recommendations

Recommendations for interventions vary based on the student's unique pattern of strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes, a change in school setting is suggested. Other times, the use of accommodations such as extra time to complete tests, including standardized tests, makes the most sense. Limited use of Scantron testing may also be warranted. In addition, medications may be

suggested as a part of the treatment regime. Using technology to assist learning (assistive technology) may be worth consideration. Usually several recommendations are offered and are individually tailored to each person.

Re-evaluations

Once children have been diagnosed with learning issues, it is standard practice to recommend a complete re-evaluation within 3-5 years. It is helpful to see how individuals have improved with the prescribed interventions as well as to identify areas that continue to need to be addressed or any new problems that may have arisen. Often times the diagnosis does not change, but the interventions and accommodations do. Older children and teenagers may need the help of accommodations to cope with their learning concerns.

Standardized tests (IOWA's, PSAT, AP exams, ACT, SAT, GRE etc.) often require updated evaluations to justify the continuing of accommodations during test administration.

Though the testing process can be confusing and overwhelming, the results are crucial to understanding a child's learning profile. The results can then lead directly to remediation recommendations as well as accommodations. Understanding an individual's strengths and weaknesses can help teachers, therapists and other professionals ensure that student's success and increase their ability to live up to their potential.

Dr. Hays has been a licensed psychologist in private practice in the Atlanta area for over 25 years. She obtained her Ph.D. in School Psychology from The University of Georgia with minors in Neuropsychology and Clinical Child Psychology. She completed her Clinical Child Psychology internship at Vanderbilt's Child Psychiatry Clinic. She then worked at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital working with medically fragile children. She subsequently moved to Atlanta and joined the Behavioral Institute of Atlanta where she was a partner for 18 years before becoming a solo practitioner in Northeast Atlanta. Her practice specializes in psycho-educational evaluations to help diagnose learning disorders, behavioral problems, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, depression, and anxiety disorders in children, adolescents and adults. She is married and the mother of two teenage daughters.

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