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# UNDERSTANDING THE SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATION: *A Parent Guide*

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## Understanding the Special Education Evaluation: *A Parent Guide*

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### What is a special education evaluation?

A special education evaluation is conducted to determine if your child has a disability and may benefit from special educational services. The evaluation is a set of tests, observations, and interviews that help to describe your child's performance and how they learn best. You must give your consent for the evaluation.

### Do all children receive the same evaluation?

No, evaluations are different for each child depending on what the child's learning difficulties. Most children will be tested on their cognitive abilities and, if they are old enough, on their general academic skills. But tests for speech and language, motor skills, behavior, reading, math, and other areas may be included as needed. It is also common for parents to be interviewed about the child's background and development.

### Who is involved in the evaluation process?

Several professionals work together as a team to understand your child's strengths and challenges:

- **School Psychologist**

- Conducts cognitive and academic testing to see how your child learns and thinks.
- Observes your child's behavior and problem-solving skills.
- Helps determine if learning or behavior difficulties are related to a disability.





- **Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP)**
  - Evaluates how your child understands and uses language.
  - Assesses speech clarity, vocabulary, grammar, and social use of language.
  - Identifies whether communication challenges affect learning or social interaction.
- **Classroom Teacher**
  - Shares observations about how your child learns, participates, and behaves in class.
  - Provides examples of schoolwork.
  - Helps the team see how your child's skills compare with grade-level expectations.
- **Other Specialists (if needed)**
  - **Occupational Therapist:** Looks at fine motor skills, handwriting, and sensory needs.
  - **Physical Therapist:** Checks balance, coordination, and movement.
  - **Nurse/Health Professional:** Reviews medical history that might affect learning.
  - **Bilingual Evaluator:** Ensures testing is fair for students who speak more than one language.
- **Parents and Other Family Members**
  - Provides background on areas including the child's health, early development, temperament, prior education, family home, language.
  - Shares concerns.





## How is information collected?

- **Testing:** Standardized tests measure skills in areas like reading, math, memory, language, or motor skills.
- **Observations:** Professionals watch your child in the classroom or other school settings.
- **Interviews and Questionnaires:** Parents, teachers, and sometimes the student share their perspectives.
- **Review of Records:** Past report cards, health records, and previous test results are considered.

## How will I learn the results?

The evaluation team will meet with you to review all findings.

You should ask questions, request explanations, and share your perspective. You have the right to receive this information in your home language if you are not proficient in English. Ask for interpreter or translator services so you clearly understand the results of the testing and recommendations.

You'll receive a written report that explains:

- Whether your child qualifies for special education under one of the categories in IDEA.
- Your child's strengths and challenges.
- Recommendations for supports and services.





## What happens after the evaluation?

If your child is found eligible, the team—including you—will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that outlines goals and services. If your child is not eligible, the school will discuss other supports that may help.

**Remember:** An evaluation is not about labeling—it's about understanding your child's needs so they can progress and learn.

## Still have questions?

Talk to your child's case manager or any of the evaluation team members.

## How can I get help in my language?

Request interpreter services at your child's school or the school district's office. Request translated written information if needed. Information available to all parents in the school district should be available to you as well.

