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## Questions to Ask Specialists Who Evaluate for Learning Disabilities

By: GreatSchools Editorial Staff (2007)

Hiring a private specialist to conduct a psychoeducational evaluation of your child is a big commitment of time, effort, and money. To find someone competent, ask other parents or school staff for their recommendations. You'll probably want to interview more than one specialist before choosing the person who will work with your child. If you get a recommendation from someone outside the school, make sure the private evaluator has the qualifications and/or credentials your state or district requires.

Before hiring a specialist to conduct psychoeducational testing, you will want to interview her about her professional qualifications, procedures, and fees. The responses will allow you to screen a prospective specialist to see whether you feel comfortable with her, and to discover any potential "mismatches" with your child's needs. The conversation can also help you prepare your child for the evaluation process.

You'll be better prepared to interview an evaluation specialist if you have some background information on evaluation for special education eligibility and/or learning disabilities. The articles in the box below provide that information, and may also help you determine your specific expectations and goals for the evaluation.

In order to get the most benefit from your initial conversation with a psychoeducational evaluation specialist, you'll want to have a good basic understanding about why and how evaluations for learning disabilities are conducted—and how to understand the results. We highly recommend that you read or review one or more of the following articles before you interview a prospective assessment specialist:

- **Special Education Evaluation - Federal Rights**
- **Evaluation - An Overview**
- **Understanding the Results of Psychoeducational Testing**
- **IDEA 2004 Close Up: Specific Learning Disabilities Evaluation and Eligibility**

### Before: Questions to Ask Yourself

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- In what areas do I suspect that my child may have a learning disability?
  - What behaviors have I observed that I have questions or concerns about?
- What information about my child do I have that might be helpful to the professional?
  - What observations can I offer about his strengths, weaknesses, personality or temperament, academic likes and dislikes, or other traits.

- What do I want to learn from the evaluation?
  - What are the specific academic skill areas in which his school performance is low relative to his peers?
  - What underlying processing problems-such as short-term memory problems or persistent anxiety-do I suspect may be affecting his performance?
- How do I hope to use this information?

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## **During: Questions to Ask a Prospective Evaluation Specialist**

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- What are your credentials/training in educational testing?
- What experience have you had with testing students my child's age?
- How long have you been doing evaluations? Are you familiar with evaluation practices/personnel at local public schools?
- What information will you want me to provide?
- Will you contact my child's school for information and records? Will you interview school staff?
- Will you observe my child in the classroom?
- Will you interview me? How will you interview my child?
- Will the evaluation include any of the tests generally given in the public schools? (This may help you avoid paying for private testing that the school can do or has already done.)
- What types of tests will you use? Will you evaluate his social, emotional, and/or psychological status?
- How should I prepare my child for the evaluation process?
- Will your final report integrate all of the individual tests done so that I have an overall picture of my child's strengths and needs?
- What is the complete cost of the evaluation and report?
- How soon can I expect to receive the evaluation results? When will you review the evaluation results with me?

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## **After: Review and Follow-Up Questions about the Evaluation Report**

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- Was the report of evaluation results clear? If not, was the evaluator able to answer all

of my questions? If not, write down any unanswered questions so that you can follow up by telephone or in person to get information that you can understand.

- Do I understand what the professional is recommending for my child based on the test results?
- What action should I now take? What's my plan for getting several recommended actions completed?

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[http://www.ldonline.org/article/Questions\\_to\\_Ask\\_Specialists\\_Who\\_Evaluate\\_for\\_Learning\\_Disabilities?theme=print](http://www.ldonline.org/article/Questions_to_Ask_Specialists_Who_Evaluate_for_Learning_Disabilities?theme=print)

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