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Understanding Evaluations

For many parents, learning that your child needs specialized services in school to be successful is a distressing and confusing time. Understanding the process of obtaining needed services for your child will assist you in alleviating some of your stress and concerns.

Evaluations are diagnostic tools; they do not contain answers or solutions. They are tests designed to provide an overview of your child's academic performance, basic cognitive and social/ emotional functioning, and his or her current strengths or weaknesses; they can also test hearing and vision. Evaluations are not able to predict your child's future performance, nor his or her ability. That said, they are excellent tools because they break your child's academic performance down into subsets, such as reading comprehension, spelling and basic arithmetic. They can also rule out physical problems, such as hearing or vision impairments, which may be affecting learning. The data collected is invaluable because it guides the educational process, and the development of goals for your child.

Evaluations are the first step in getting your child the assistance he or she needs to learn and progress in school. The evaluation informs you and the teachers about what your child needs. This information is then used to create needed services through formal methods, like an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or through use of more informal classroom supports, like preferred seating.

The following pages will explain the evaluation requirements, the timeline for evaluations to be completed, who is doing the evaluations, and what those evaluation scores mean.

***PTAC staff can help answer any questions you may have about the evaluation process.
Contact PTAC by email at: ptac@stic-cil.org or by phone at: 607-724-2111.***

Evaluation Requirements

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that all children being considered for special education services be evaluated in an individualized and nondiscriminatory way. This means that the school district will ensure that:

- The evaluations used to assess the student are provided in the student's native language or other mode of communication
- Evaluations are administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel
- No single measure or assessment is used as the sole criterion for determining whether a student is a student with a disability or for determining an appropriate educational program for a student
- The student is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability
- The results of the evaluation are provided to the parents in their native language or mode of communication at no cost to the parent

Once the parent or school staff has requested a child be evaluated and the parent/guardian has signed and returned the "permission to evaluate" form to the school, the evaluations or testing/ data collection begins. The evaluation should include a variety of assessment tools and strategies and the initial evaluation must include at least:

- A physical
- A social history
- Observations of the student in the various learning environments
- Other appropriate assessments or evaluations should be completed as necessary to ascertain the physical, mental, behavioral and emotional factors which contribute to the suspected disability or need. This would include a functional behavioral assessment for a student whose behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others.

Who does the evaluations?

The evaluation is conducted by a group of individuals. This group could include:

- the parent or guardian
- at least one of the student's general education teachers
- a special education teacher or special service provider related to your child's area of need (such as a speech/language therapist, physical therapist, occupational therapist)
- someone from the school district who is qualified to provide or supervise special education services within the school
- someone who is qualified to explain the test results and what the results mean to your child's education and/or an interpreter, if you feel you need one
- any person with special knowledge of your child or expertise in an area that would be helpful in understanding your child, if you and the other team members believe this is appropriate (usually considered for children in middle school or older but they are invited no matter their age)

It is important to note that the group of individuals conducting the evaluation could be as small as two or three people depending on the student's needs and school size. Ideally it is better to have more than one school staff doing all of the evaluations but it can happen and it does not necessarily mean that the evaluations are invalid. If there are concerns about who has conducted the evaluation, speak to the school personnel and/ or special education office.



Paperwork!! Lots of paperwork.

The parent/ guardian will be receiving a lot of paperwork from the school district to complete in order to get the best overall picture of the student. It is important for the parent/guardian to ask for clarification if the paperwork is confusing or if assistance is needed in completing the documents.

Timeline for Evaluations

Once the school receives the initial request to evaluate, within **10 days** they will request the parent's consent to evaluate OR they will offer to meet with the parent and discuss the concerns and the need for an evaluation.

The school district must complete an initial evaluation within **60 days** of receipt of a parent's signed consent. Therefore, parents/guardians should make sure that they obtain and sign the "permission to evaluate form" as soon as possible. The longer it takes to return the required documents, the longer a student waits until needed services are in place.

There are certain instances (lack of evaluators, child absent due to illness, etc...) where this timeline will need to be extended. When this occurs a mutual agreement between the student's parent/guardian and the school district will need to be met.

To read the NYSED evaluation regulations go to:

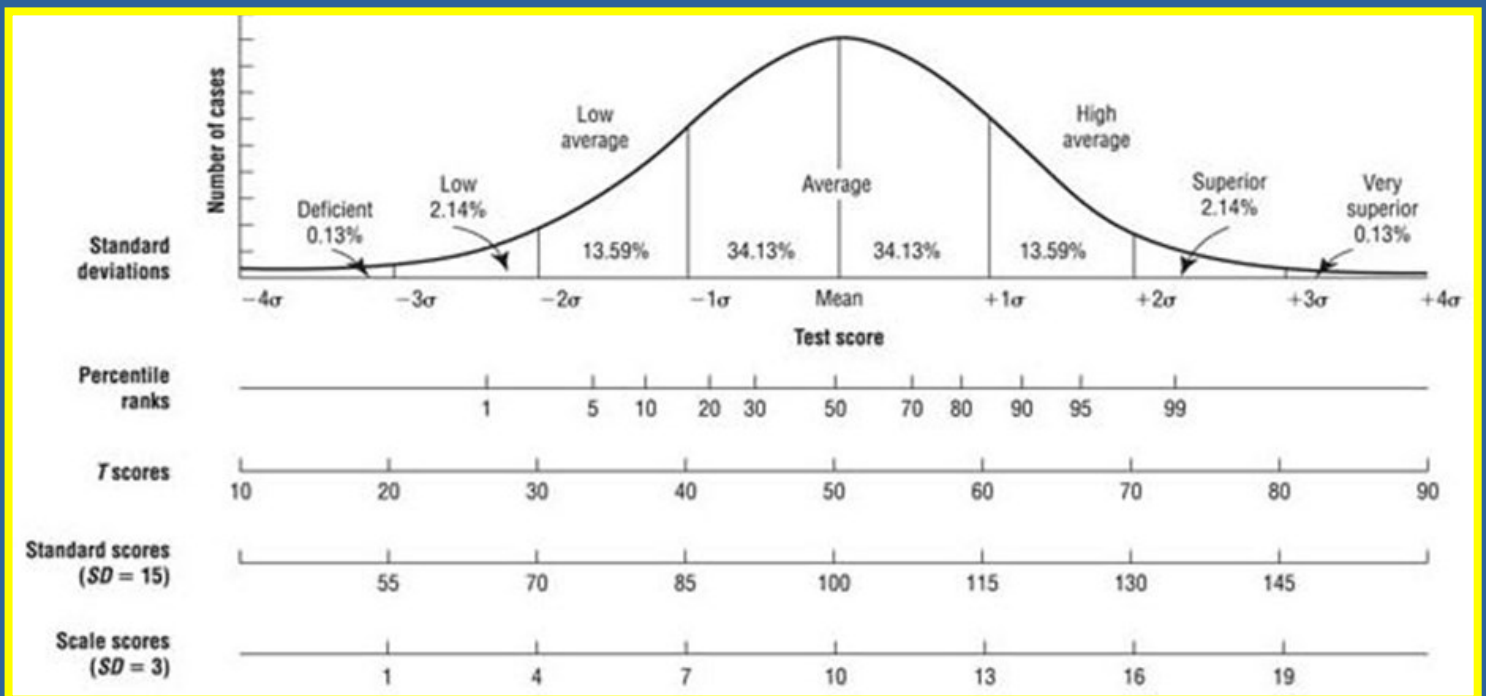
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/lawsregs/sect2004.htm>

Interpreting Test Scores

The testing and data collecting is done and now the results are compiled into reports. Parents/ caregivers are handed the test results and become confused when they hear that their child scored in the 50th percentile on an evaluation. 50 is concerning, right? Scoring 50 could be concerning on some tests but not others. Listed below is the essential information parents/ guardians should know about understanding test data:

- Usually, overall information is presented in Standard Scores, which have a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. That means a standard score of 100 is exactly average. The majority of the population (68%) will score within 15 points of the mean (100). Most of the students in a class will score between 85 and 115 on an assessment. The further away from 100 someone scores, the more atypical it is. For example, approximately 3% of the population is considered truly gifted (an IQ above 130 versus an average IQ of 100).
- Sometimes T-Scores are used, especially with Behavior Rating Scales. These have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. This means that anything between 40 and 60 is normal. The further a score falls from 50, the more atypical it is. If a student is rated with a T-Score of 75 in depression on a rating scale, this means that the student is showing significant symptoms of depression.
- Percentiles do NOT mean what percentage of the questions the student got correct. It is a statistical term that indicates how well she did compared to other students the same age. For example, if an average score of 100 is at the 50th percentile. This means that 50 percent of students the same age did better and 50 percent did worse. If a score is at the 23rd percentile, she performed better than 23 percent of students her age.
- Grade equivalents can be very misleading and parents should not put too much stock in them.

Retrieved from: <http://schoolpsychologistfiles.com/spedtesting/>



The bell curve (pictured above) is a powerful tool. When you use the bell curve, you can objectively compare any child's percentile rank to that of a group of children. You can also compare a single child's progress or regression when compared to the group.

If you have any questions about an evaluation score, ask the professional that performed the evaluation to explain the results.

More information about this topic can be found at: <http://schoolpsychologistfiles.com/spedtesting/> and

http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/tests_measurements.html#13

Upcoming Trainings and Events

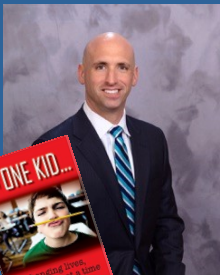
To register for these free events contact PTAC
at: www.ptac-stic.com/registration

If you have any questions or to register by
phone call (607) 724-2111

Wednesday, July 19, 2017- “Summer Safety” presented by PTAC staff at TR Events Binghamton, NY from 5:30pm- 7:00pm. Join us to explore summer safety tips to ensure your child gets the most enjoyment out of their summer while being safe.

Tuesday, August 22, 2017- “Back to School” presented by PTAC staff at TR Events Binghamton, NY from 5:30pm- 7:00pm. Join us as we learn useful tips to prepare ourselves and our children for the back to school routine. “All about me” sheets will be completed during this training as well.

Motivating and Managing Hard to Reach, Uninterested and Disruptive Students



Parents, caregivers and teachers are spending more and more time on motivating and managing children’s behavior. During this presentation Brian Mendler will teach participants:

- How to avoid the “#1 motivation killer” for children
- How to defuse any child, at any time, in any situation
- Several instructional strategies to help motivate youth

Date: Thursday, October 19, 2017

Time: 8:30am- 3:00pm

Location: Doubletree by Hilton

225 Water St.

Binghamton, NY 13901

Registration: 8:00- 8:30

Morning Session: 8:30- 12:00

Lunch on your own: 12:00- 1:00

Afternoon Session: 1:00- 3:00

Bring your own beverages/ snacks

Watch Brian Mendler on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTwaS-2ecdI>

135 E. Frederick St.
Binghamton, NY 13904

P: 607-724-2111

Web: www.ptac-stic.com

Email: ptac@stic-cil.org

 Southern Tier PTAC

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