

Understanding the Evaluation Process

IDEA 2004



The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that serves families of infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities in Ohio, and agencies who provide services to them. OCECD works through the coalition efforts of more than 35 parent and professional disability organizations which comprise the Coalition.

Established in 1972 and staffed primarily by parents of children and adults with disabilities, persons with disabilities, and education professionals, the Coalition's mission is to ensure that every Ohio child with special needs receives a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment to enable that child to reach his/her highest potential. Throughout Ohio, the Coalition's services reach families of children and youth, birth through twenty-six, with all disabilities.

OCECD's programs help parents become informed and effective representatives for their children in all educational settings. In addition, youth are assisted to advocate for themselves. Through knowledge about laws, resources, rights and responsibilities, families are better able to work with agencies to ensure that appropriate services are received for the benefit of their sons and daughters.



**OHIO COALITION FOR THE EDUCATION OF
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

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The evaluation process is one way to measure a child's success.

“The world is but a canvas to our imagination.”

It is only through creative problem solving that we allow our children to become the beautiful masterpieces they are meant to be.



IDEA 2004 looks at the **DEVELOPMENTAL**, **FUNCTIONAL**, and **ACADEMIC** needs of a child.



- The rights afforded children under IDEA 2004 are provided to put forward the proper supports and services that will allow our children to aspire to their full potential.
- No one should underestimate the value or ability of a child.
- All children have the right to learn and to be successful.

Evaluation

Evaluations are administered to a child to determine if the child:

- may have a disability
- can progress in the general education curriculum without supports
- has the necessary skills to be successful in life



What is an Evaluation?

“**Evaluation**” means procedures used in accordance with rule 3301-51-06 of the Administrative Code for evaluations to determine whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs.

In the past Ohio has used the term Multi-factored Evaluation and you may still hear this term used in your meetings and discussions; however under IDEA 2004, and as adopted by Ohio in the Operating Standards, the correct terminology is **initial evaluation** or **re-evaluation**.

Evaluations are used to determine if a child qualifies for “**special education**” services..

What is the Definition of Special Education ?

“Specially designed instruction at no cost to the parents. To meet the **unique** needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals, and in institutions, and other settings and instruction in physical education.”

IDEA 2004 Disability Categories

There are thirteen defined disability categories covered under IDEA.

- 1. AUTISM**
- 2. INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (Cognitive/MR)**
- 3. DEAF/BLINDNESS**
- 4. DEAFNESS**
- 5. EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE**
- 6. HEARING IMPAIRMENT**
- 7. MULTIPLE DISABILITIES**
- 8. ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENT**
- 9. OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT** (includes Tourette's Syndrome)
- 10. SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY**
- 11. SPEECH OR LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT**
- 12. TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY**
- 13. VISUAL IMPAIRMENT**

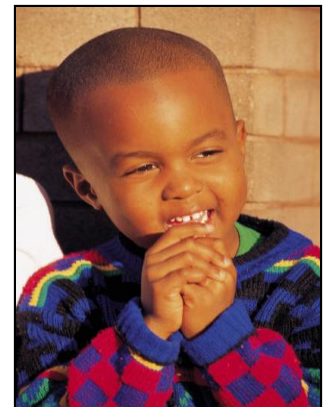
How to Request and Begin the Evaluation Process

If a parent suspects their child has a disability, they should:

Write a letter to the principal of the school where their child attends and share their concerns and give consent in writing to begin the evaluation process

or

Request a meeting with school personnel to sign a “**request for evaluation**” form at an evaluation planning meeting



How to Request and Begin the Evaluation Process cont'd

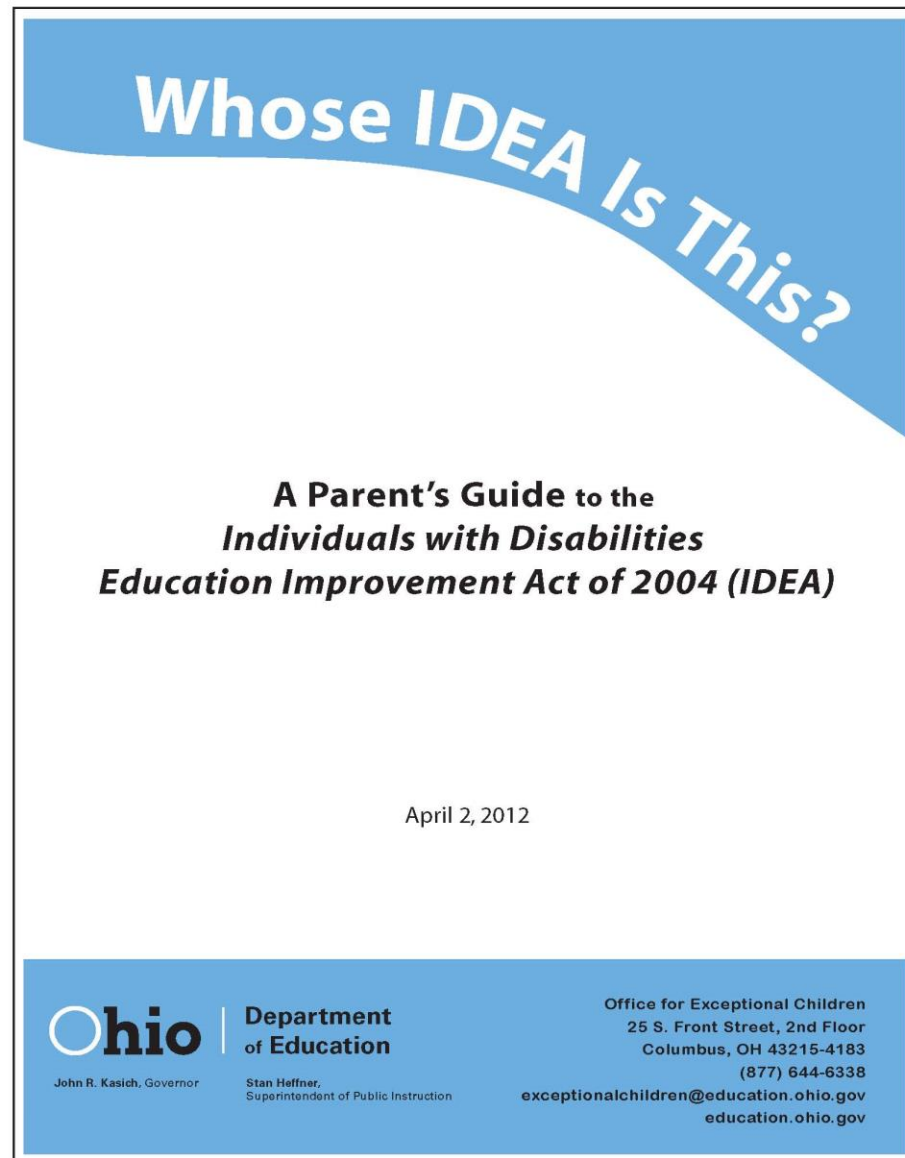
The school then has 30 days to respond to the parent's written request with their intent to evaluate by

- Sending a **PRIOR WRITTEN NOTICE LETTER** to the parent. This is one of the most important forms in requesting an evaluation.

At the time of request, a copy of "**Whose IDEA Is This?**" is given to the parent.

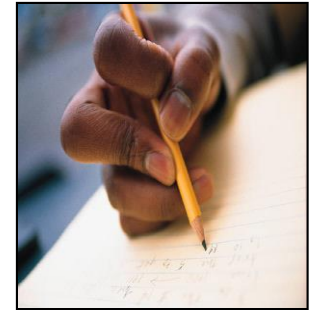


This booklet
contains
a parent's
**PROCEDURAL
SAFEGUARDS**



The Evaluation Planning Process

When The School Receives Written Permission Requesting an Initial Evaluation:



- A **PLANNING MEETING** is held.
- Parents and school personnel discuss the child's needs in all areas of suspected disability.
- Observations, class work, and any interventions that have been used are discussed.
- A **PLANNING MEETING FORM** is completed (forms may vary).

Sample Planning Form

School districts may use a form that looks like this or may instead write the needed information on a separate sheet of paper. Either must be made a part of the Evaluation Team Report (ETR).

School-Age Planning Form: INITIAL MULTIFACTORED EVALUATION (MFE)					
Student's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____					
STEP 1: List area(s) of suspected disability: _____					
STEP 2: In column (C), record the assessments completed within the past year by listing the assessment date and the position of the individual or agency that conducted the assessment.					
STEP 3: In the methods columns (D), indicate the position of the individual assigned to conduct the assessments listed in column (A).					
(A) Assessment Areas	(B) Required to Determine Eligibility for:	(C) Completed by:	(D) Methods		
			Interview/Records	Observation	Direct Assessment
Physical (medical) Examination	MD, HI, VI, OH, CHI ED, TBI, Autism				
Health and Nutrition	As needed				
General Intelligence	All, except S/L				
Academic/Preacademic Skills	All				
Educational Functioning	S/L				
Vision Abilities	All, except S/L & VI				
Eye Condition by Specialists	VI				
Braille Needs	VI				
Hearing Abilities	All except HI				
Audiological Status	HI				
Communicative Status	All				
Communication Mode	HI				
Adaptive Behavior	MD, MR (DH)				
Social and Emotional Status	MD, HI, VI, OH, CHI SLD				
Classroom Observations	SLD				
Informal Behavioral	ED				
Informal Behavioral	ED				
Behavior/Personality Measure	ED				
Background Information	ED				
● Reading and Math Instruction	All				
● Social and Cultural	MR (DH)				
● English Proficiency	All				
Teacher Recommendations	MR (DH)				
Motor Abilities	All, except S/L				
Vocational/Occupational and Transition Needs	When needed, and as required by age 14 and age 18				
● Aptitudes					
● Interests					
● Preferences					
● Employability					
Assistive Technology Needs	As Needed				
Other:					
Other:					

The team has taken into consideration possible sources of racial/cultural bias in planning these assessments.
 _____ (Signature of Evaluation Team Chairperson) Date of Plan: ____/____/____

What is an Initial Evaluation?

An initial evaluation is the first formal evaluation of your child the school will administer.

It is a series of assessments administered to determine if a child qualifies as a child with a disability under IDEA 2004.

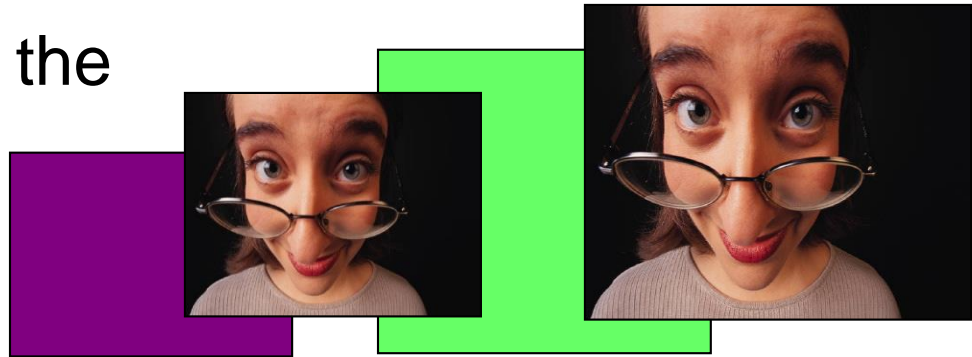


IDEA 2004 requires an assessment of the DEVELOPMENTAL, FUNCTIONAL and ACADEMIC needs of a child.

Who is Involved in the Evaluation Process?

A team of people, known as the **Evaluation Team**, is formed. Parents are always a designated member of the team.

The only required members of the evaluation team are the **parent**, the **child's teacher** and a person who understands and is **qualified to interpret the assessment scores**.



Who Pays For and Administers an Evaluation?

The **SCHOOL DISTRICT of RESIDENCE** is required to cover all costs of the evaluation for children enrolled in public schools. This includes children in county jails and detention centers.

INDIVIDUALS ADMINISTERING assessments must meet the specific criteria required by the test creators as to whom is qualified to administer the test and interpret the test results.



How and Where are Evaluations Administered ?

Evaluations are usually administered in the school where the child attends.

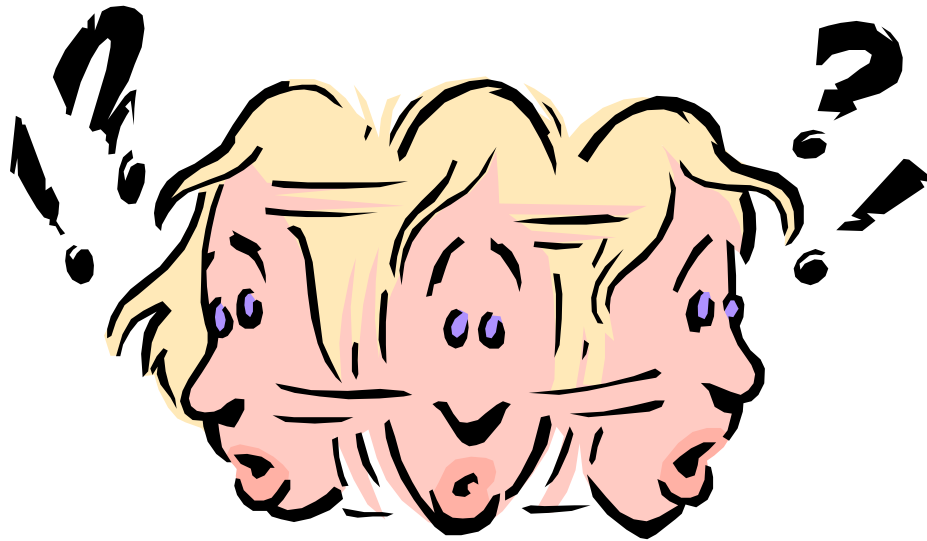
They may be given:

- **in a separate room**
- **in a small group setting**
- **through observations within classrooms or group activities**

There are specific instructions as to the location, time frame, and who can administer each assessment. If there is **any deviation** from these instructions, it must be noted on the assessment form.

How Important is Measurement

Bowls
Rulers
Stones



Cups
Spoons
Rope

Without the right tools, an accurate evaluation cannot take place.
Even with the right tools, if they are not used in the intended manner, the evaluation results will be inaccurate.

An Overview of What Assessment Tools are Used

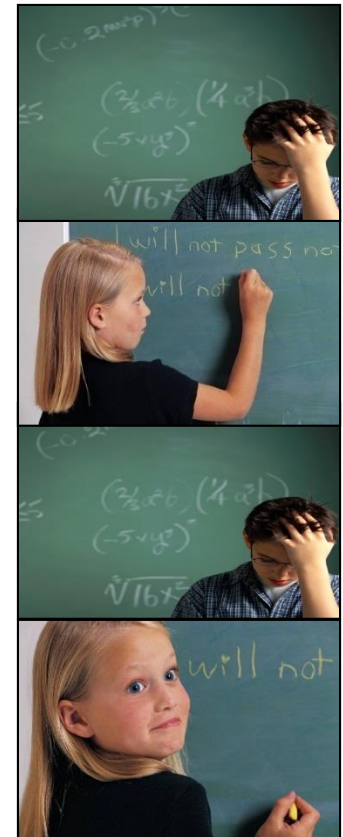
There are many different ways to evaluate a child.

Standardized Testing is the most common method used in the evaluation process.

Three other ways to evaluate are:

- Norm-Referenced Assessment
- Criterion-Referenced Assessment
- Curriculum-Based Assessment

All have **specific criteria** with regard to the administration of the assessment and how to score the results.



Definition of “Standardized”

When purchasing a pair of shoes, the shoe sizes are “standardized”. A size 8 is the same no matter where the shoes are purchased.



It is the same with assessments. The assessment results are measured against a set of standard responses based on what is most commonly recorded within a particular group of children.

Definition of “Criterion-Referenced”

The established criteria is to climb a rope to the top and ring a bell. The child will be assessed on the number of times it takes him to reach the top of the rope and ring the bell.



This compares a child’s performance against an established criteria. It is a measurement of an individual child’s achievement.

Definition of “Curriculum-Based”

Using the shoe analogy again, we know that the child wears a size 5 shoe but laces work better than buckles for this child and a half-inch heel is more appropriate than a two inch heel.



This assessment uses the curriculum the student is studying to assess development, understanding and supports needed to be successful with the material being presented. It is usually done by direct observation and can be completed quickly.

Definition of “Norm-Referenced”

It is comparable to a group of children running a race. Some children would finish first, some would finish last, but most would finish in the middle.



This assessment compares a child’s performance to that of his or her peers. It is designed to determine rank or position in comparison to those of their peers at the national level.

IQ/ABILITY TESTS

These tests evaluate a child's IQ and ability or, in other words, analytical and memory skills.

The IQ measures: general learning ability



Some IQ tests measure creativity, practical knowledge and/or critical thinking skills. IQ scores should **NEVER BE USED** to limit a child nor their ability to achieve or deny special education services.

One of the Most Frequently Used IQ Assessments is:

The Wechsler Scale for Children-Fourth Edition is commonly referred to as the:

WISC-IV



Used to assess the cognitive ability of children from ages 6 years to 16 years 11 months. It consists of four indexes made-up of fifteen subtests.

WISC IV Index – Verbal Comprehension

Similarities
Vocabulary
Comprehension
(Information)
(Word
Reasoning)

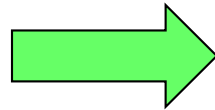


Verbal Comprehension Index subtests measure a child's abstract reasoning skill and inferential thinking. It assesses a child's receptive and expressive language, vocabulary and general knowledge. It is not a measure of reading comprehension.

WISC IV – Working Memory

Digit Span

Letter-Number Sequencing
(Arithmetic)



Working Memory Index

subtests measure a
child's short term memory
and working memory

WISC-IV Index – Perceptual Reasoning

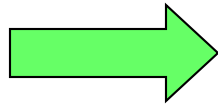
Block Design
Picture Concepts
Matrix Reasoning
(Picture Completion)



Perceptual Reasoning Index subtests assess a child's ability to see visual/spatial relationships. It looks at visual reasoning and memory, as well as categorization ability. It also assesses a child's intellectual functioning, flexibility of thought and alertness to the environment.

WISC IV – Processing Speed

Coding
Symbol Search
(Cancellation)



Processing Speed Index
subtests measure a child's fine motor clerical skills, visual memory, processing speed, and visual attention. It also measures the ability to scan quickly.

Subtests

Subtests are used to evaluate multiple areas.

- A subtest can help to identify a child's specific strengths and/or weaknesses.

Subtest scores usually range from 1 to 19. (One being the lowest possible score indicating a significant weakness and nineteen being the highest possible score indicating a significant strength.)



Subtest continued

The **average score** on any given subtest is 10.

That score is called the “**mean**”.



Information on subtests and the interpretation of all assessment scores will be explained during the evaluation team meeting.

Achievement Tests

These tests measure how a child presently is functioning with regard to their educational skills, such as reading, writing, and math. In other words, the academic skills they have developed.

There are two forms of achievement assessments:

- **Screening tests** which are a more brief assessment of reading, math and spelling.
- **Comprehensive tests** which are a more specific set of assessments that measure reading, math, oral language, fluency, phonological awareness, rapid naming, and writing.

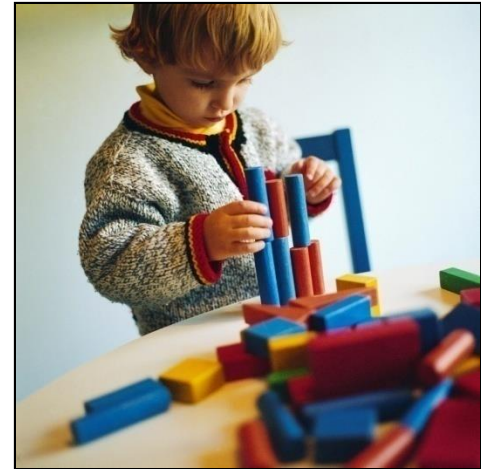
Most achievement tests can be administered by teachers and should be consistent with classroom work.

One of the Most Frequently Used Achievement Assessments is:

The Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement
is commonly referred to as the:

KTEA

This assessment is used for children in grades 1 through 12. It screens children in reading, decoding and comprehension, math application and computation, and spelling.



Scores are presented in standard scores, percentiles, age-equivalent, and/or grade equivalent.

Measuring Progress

Standard Score (SS): shows how a child is presently performing in relationship to what they are capable of achieving.

- written as SS87

Percentile Rank: Shows how a child compares to other children in rank out of 100.

- written as 55 percentile



Percentiles

When the school says your child is at the 63rd Percentile, it means your child scored the same as or higher than 63 out of 100 children of the same age. In other words only 37 children scored higher than your child.



Table 11-2 | *Conversion Table: Standard Scores and Percentile Ranks*

Standard Score	Subtest Score	Percentile Rank
145	19	>99
140	18	>99
135	17	99
130	16	98
125	15	95
120	14	91
115	13	84
110	12	75
109	–	73
108	–	70
107	–	68
106	–	66
105	11	63
104	–	61
103	–	58
102	–	55
101	–	53
100	10	50
99	–	47
98	–	45
97	–	42
96	–	39
95	9	37
94	–	34
93	–	32
92	–	30
91	–	27
90	8	25
89	–	23
88	–	21
87	–	19
86	–	18
85	7	16
80	6	9
75	5	5
70	4	2
65	3	1
60	2	<1
55	1	>1

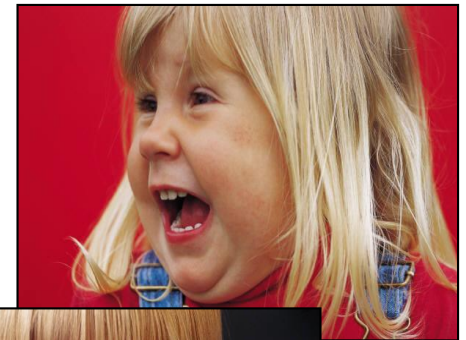
Measuring Progress

Grade-equivalent (GE): shows how a child compares to children in the same grade.

- written as GE 5.6

Age-equivalent (AE): will show how a child's performance compares to others his or her age.

- written as AE 3-6



Speech/Language

These assessments measure receptive and expressive, language and communication skills. There are many tests that can be administered to assess speech and language disorders.

Speech and language are related but not the same thing.

Children with a speech problem may have difficulty with:

- Producing the sounds of speech
- Speaking with the normal rhythm of speech

Children with language problems may have difficulty with:

- Comprehending and following directions (Receptive)
- Communicating ideas and thought (Expressive)



Behavioral/Social/Emotional

These assessments may measure a child's attention, ability to interact with peers and adults, mental health, and their understanding of social situations.

Some information which may be gathered from a behavioral assessment is an awareness of any environmental factors that may be affecting the child.



Perceptual/Motor Skills

These assessments measure a child's skill level in large and small muscle use.

Occupational therapy focuses mainly on upper body fine motor function and sensory functions.

Physical therapy focuses on lower body gross motor functions and coordinated body movements.



Adaptive Living Skills

This assessment measures a child's ability to access and function in the community, functional academics, self-care, home living, social skills and work skills.

This is a required area of assessment when evaluating a child suspected of a cognitive disability and/or multiple disabilities.

Parents generally are given forms to complete in regard to this assessment.



Evaluation Team Report (ETR) Meeting

- After all the assessments are complete, the results are gathered into a report called the **EVALUATION TEAM REPORT (ETR)**.
- A meeting is scheduled to discuss the results.
- **Parents, teachers, a person qualified to interpret assessment results, and a district representative** should all be present in the meeting. Any additional person directly involved in assessing your child should also be present.
- The parent receives a copy of the ETR document and an explanation of the results are reviewed and discussed as a **TEAM**.



Evaluation Team Report (ETR)

Meeting continued

- **Eligibility is determined** as a team based on the review and discussion of all evaluation information.
- The **document is signed** if all team members are in agreement and the child is identified under one of the thirteen disability categories of IDEA 2004.
- It is then documented on the **Evaluation Team Report**.
- After the document is signed, a meeting date may be set to **write an IEP**.
- If there are team members who **do not agree** with the ETR, they may write a dissenting opinion statement on the ETR document. If the parent disagrees with the ETR document, they do not have to sign it even if they write a dissenting opinion statement.

What is an Independent Evaluation ?

When a disagreement arises as to the results from the school district's evaluation, the parent has a right to request an Independent Evaluation at the school district's expense.

- The parent must **REQUEST** the independent evaluation **IN WRITING**.
- The school will **RESPOND** in **WRITING** with a list of qualified evaluators.



Independent Evaluation continued

- The parent **MAY CHOOSE** an evaluator from the list or another qualified evaluator and notify the school of their choice.
- The school then will **SCHEDULE** the independent evaluation and cover all costs.
- A meeting will be held to **REVIEW** the **INDEPENDENT EVALUATION** information and address the child's eligibility for special education services.



Understanding Assessment Results

There are many ways to document assessment results. You will see charts, graphs, and written narratives of your child's strengths and area of need presented in different manners.

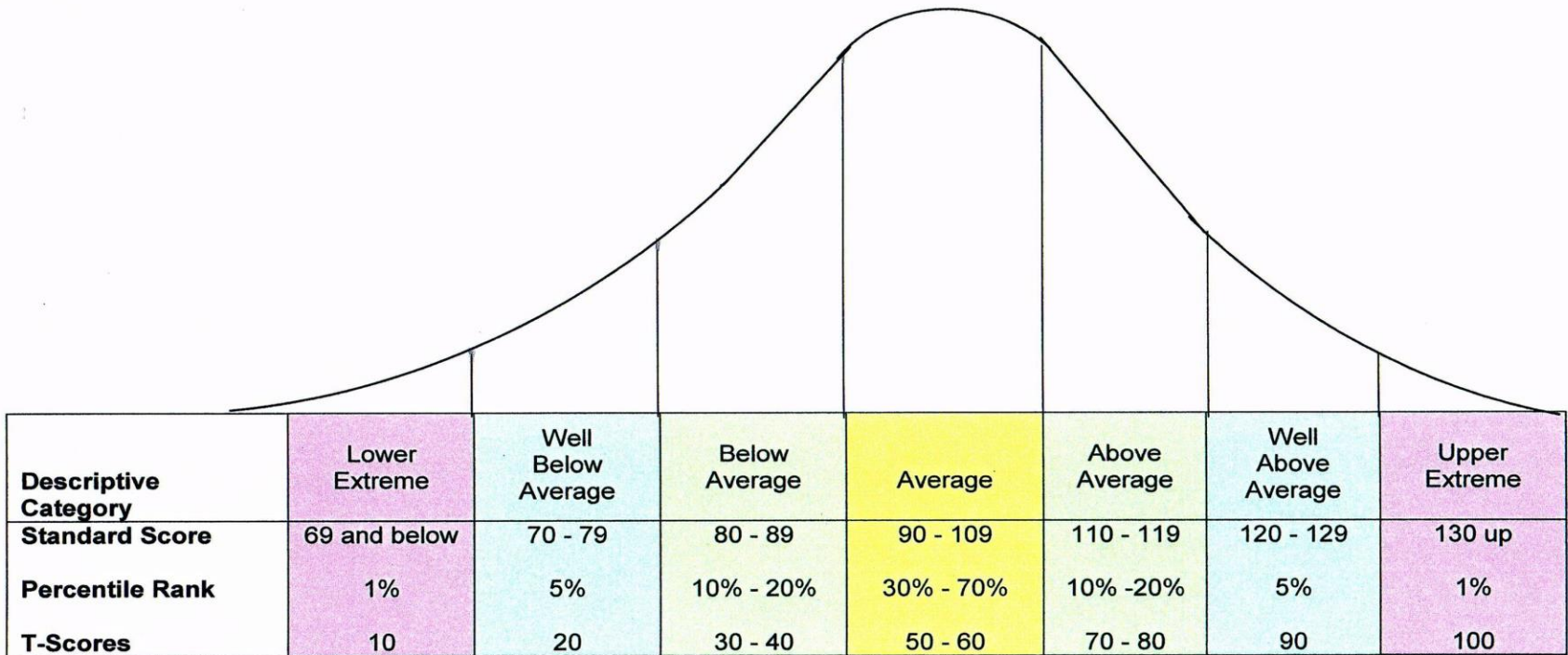
One of these graphs may be:

- **Bell Curve**

It may show your child's Standard Score, Percentile Rank, and/or T-Score.



BELL CURVE GRAPH



The Standard score (SS), Percentile Rank, and T-Score represented on the Bell Curve are self-explanatory. (Note: Remember that on T-Scores the higher the score the more significant the problem.)

How to Use the Evaluation Results to Develop an IEP

- The evaluation provides important baseline information needed to develop a child's **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**.
- If the evaluation information is incomplete in any skill area, an appropriate IEP cannot be developed.

Information taken from the final evaluation report is used to develop present levels of performance within the IEP document.



What is an IEP?

An **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is a written document that specifies what special education supports and services a child identified under IDEA 2004 will receive in their educational setting.

IEP Team Members:

- Parent
- District Representative
- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
(Also known as Intervention Teacher)
- Child
- Someone who can interpret assessment results



Tips for Gathering Information from the Evaluation Document:

- Highlight or list all strengths noted in the evaluation.
- Highlight or list all areas of need noted in the evaluation.
- Compare previous assessment scores with current scores to document progress or regression.
- Document a list of strategies that have been successful.
- Document from the evaluation your child's learning styles.

What Does the Re-evaluation Include?

A re-evaluation is administered every three years to determine if a child continues to qualify for special education services.

It is different from an initial evaluation because there are **many options** available as to how and what the evaluation will look like.

The parent has to give **written consent** for any re-evaluation to take place and the IEP team will decide what assessments will be given.

Reasons for current direct assessment:

- looking for progress achieved
- looking for regression that has occurred
- looking for new strengths and areas of need
- an overview of where your child is presently functioning.

If Found NOT Eligible For Special Education Services Under IDEA

The information from the evaluation may be used to:

- Develop a Section 504 Accommodation Plan
- Continue specific interventions within the classroom:

Intervention Assistance Team (IAT)

A group of school personnel who meet to discuss what educational supports may benefit a child in school.

This group may include the parent.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

A process that measures a child's response to scientific, research-based interventions.



Other Supports Available

Remember “**No Child Left Behind**” means no child.

Children who continue to struggle, receive failing grades, and never experience success have other programs and processes available to them.

One of the supports available to a child not identified for services under IDEA 2004, is called a **SECTION 504 ACCOMMODATION PLAN**. (Information on this can be obtained from OCECD or the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights.)

A Few Things to Remember

- No evaluation can take place without **WRITTEN PARENTAL CONSENT**.
- Parents are **EQUAL MEMBERS** of the Evaluation team.
- A copy of “**Whose IDEA Is This?**” is given to the parents upon request for an evaluation.
- It is best practice to send a letter to the school via **CERTIFIED MAIL** with a return receipt requested.
- Keep a **PHONE LOG** of all phone conversations. Follow up with a letter to the school reviewing what was discussed.



Final Thoughts on the Evaluation Process

There is **no shortcut** to a thorough and effective evaluation.

The skills being tested must be understood thoroughly and the results of testing carefully considered before appropriate strategies can be used to develop an IEP.

The evaluation process should be used with prudence and care.



Never Lose Focus

“We need to participate, not merely be involved. It is, after all, the parent who knew the child first and who knows the child best. Our relationship with our sons and daughters is personal and spans a lifetime.”

Cory Moore





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