

Making School Work A Toolbox for Parents

Based on the book

*No Parent Left Behind:
Navigating the Special
Education Universe*

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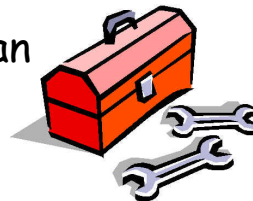


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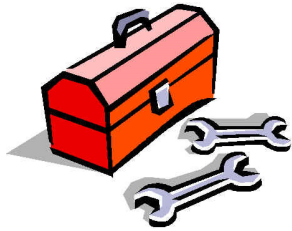
You Are the Expert on Your Child

"Parents have become so convinced
that educators know what is best
for children that they forget that
they are the experts."

Marion Wright Edelman



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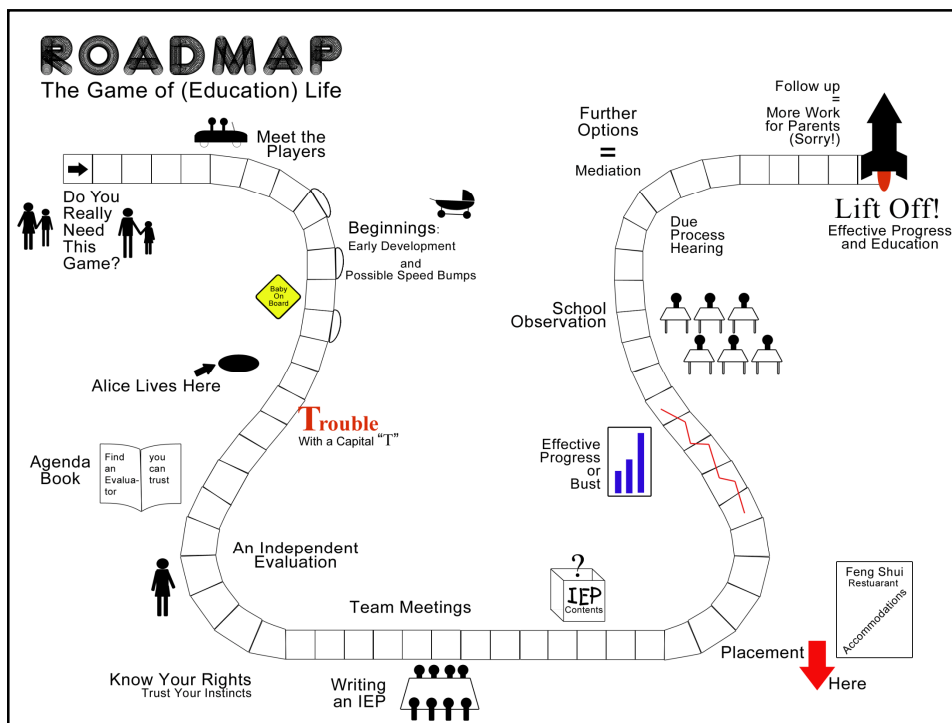
Making School Work

Agenda

- Session 1 - Speedbumps on the Road to Success: When to Watch, When to Worry
- Session 2 - Understanding Independent Evaluations
- Session 3 - 7 Habits Of Highly Effective Special Needs Families
- Session 4 - Effective Progress

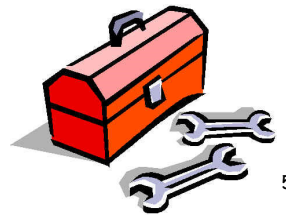


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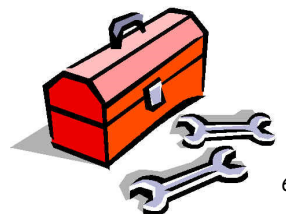
Understanding Independent Evaluations

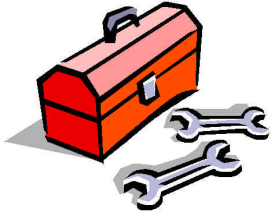
- **Who** should evaluate my child - and **where**?
- **What** areas of concerns are there?
- **How** do I make this happen?
- **Who** should I use for the evaluation?



Understanding Independent Evaluations

- What they are
- Why they are important
- What types
- What they will tell you





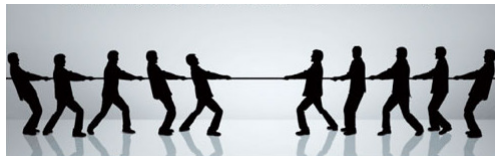
Parents Need to Know

- What specific **areas of need** their child has
- What specific **services** their child needs to be successful
- What to **do** to get those services provided

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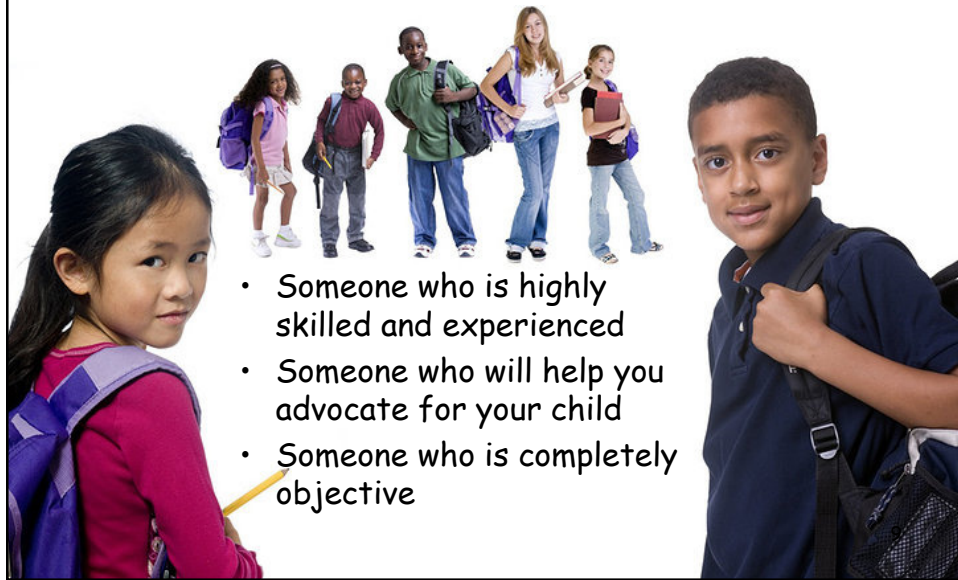
What Is An Independent Evaluation?

- An evaluation
 - Performed by a professional who does not work for a school
 - And who has **no** conflict of interest and is **only** an advocate for your child



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Independent Evaluator



- Someone who is highly skilled and experienced
- Someone who will help you advocate for your child
- Someone who is completely objective

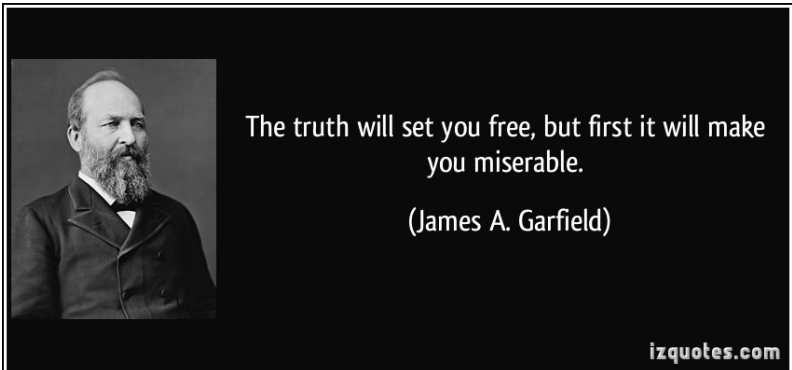
Why Is That Important?

- Specific skills and training - to answer parents' questions
- Ability to provide a diagnosis - so you child can get the right services
- Your choice of evaluator - have they worked with children like yours
- Ongoing support and advice for parents

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Why Is That Important?

- Parents want a true and accurate picture of their child



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Candy

- It's like asking candy makers what they recommend for a snack
- They recommend M&M's because that is what they sell



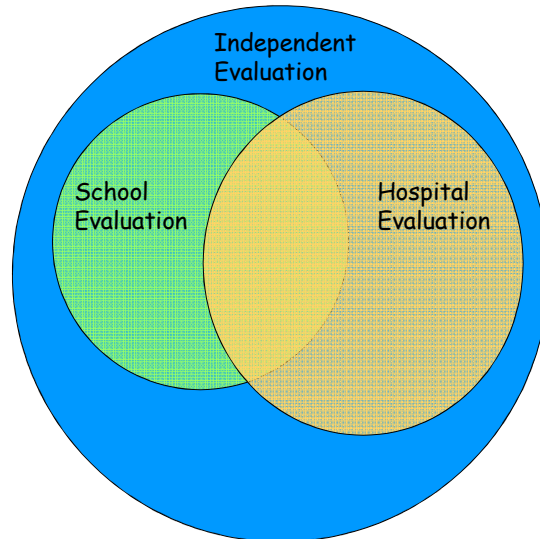
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**There is No Such Thing As A
Free Lunch**



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3 Different Evaluations



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School Testing

Advantages

- Free
- Don't have to take your child anywhere
- You don't have to argue with the school system

Disadvantages

- Won't include neuropsychological or projective testing
- Often won't provide as much detail or depth
- Will only recommend what the school has to offer
- Can't choose evaluator
- Tests chosen may provide inflated scores

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Hospital Testing



Advantages

- Cost is often mostly covered by insurance
- Can do projectives if needed
- Can do neuropsychological testing if requested

Disadvantages

- Usually doesn't include academic testing
- Doesn't include followup services
- Long waiting list
- Multiple visits required to get all testing areas
- Can't choose evaluator

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Independent Evaluations

Advantages

- You can choose an evaluator with the skills and experience you need
- Results will be complete and objective
- Recommendations will be specific for your child's needs
- You can choose an evaluator who will provide followup services

Disadvantages

- Some evaluators require multiple sessions
- Many clinic evaluators do not do followup
- Cost



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Followup Services

- Attendance at TEAM meetings
- Classroom and program observations
- Testifying at mediation and due process hearings
- Consultation with other professionals
- Availability for additional parent meetings if necessary

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Followup Services

- Help with
 - understanding IEP's
 - school or outside testing
 - progress reports
 - recommending changes if needed

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Why Do You Want An Independent Evaluation?

- The right evaluation
 - Opens doors
 - Answers specific questions
 - Lights the path
 - Makes you a stronger advocate
 - Is written in language parents understand

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An Independent Evaluation Opens Doors



- Gives you objective data to share with the school
- Increases your ability to help you child qualify for appropriate help

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An Independent Evaluation Answers Specific Questions

- Testing should “fit” the questions being asked
- Provide a diagnosis or diagnostic area
- Provide concrete recommendations for the type of help or program needed



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An Independent Evaluation Lights the Path

- Provides parents a recipe to follow at home
- Tells you the path the school should take to help your child be successful



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An Independent Evaluation Makes You A Stronger Advocate

- Documents current levels of performance
- Lets you compare your child's skills to an average learner
- Helps you plan on the amount of growth your child can make in a year



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Medical Doctors Do Not Test

- Other professionals test
- Medical doctors provide medication, therapy, or referrals

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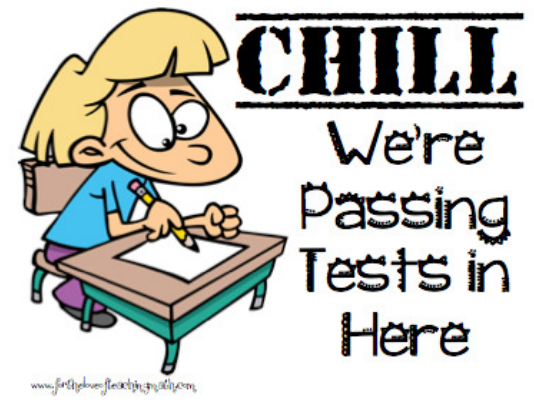
Types of Evaluations

- Psychological
- Education/academic
- Neuropsychological
- Speech/Language
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Sensory integration
- Reading



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What The Heck Are They Doing In There for 4-5 Hours?



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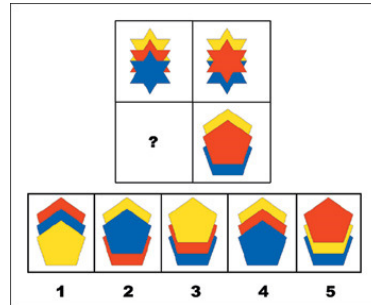
What Are Some of The Things Your Child Will Do?

- Answer verbal questions
- Copy what they see using a pencil or assemble parts into a whole
- Solve problems
- Demonstrate independent academic skills
 - Reading out loud
 - Solving math problems
 - Writing a story
- Listen and remember information
- Respond to open ended questions

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What's in a Psychological Evaluation?

- Intelligence testing
- Emotional functioning
- Cognitive strengths & weaknesses



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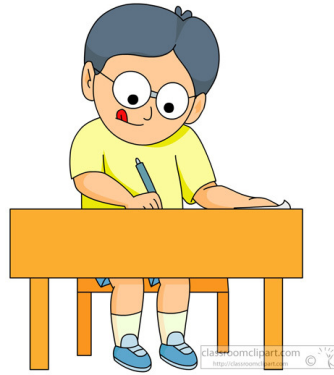
What Do You Learn From A Psychological Evaluation?

- How well your child can think
- Intellectual strengths and potential
- Self-esteem, social awareness, emotional issues
- Learning style
- Diagnosis of a cognitive, emotional or learning disability

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What's in an Academic Evaluation?

- Reading fluency
- Phonics
- Comprehension
- Writing skills
- Arithmetic
- Math problem solving



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What Do You Learn From an Academic Evaluation?

- Standard scores, percentiles and grade equivalents for each area
- Diagnosis if there is an academic learning disability
- Specific recommendations for improving skills

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Tests that I consider to be valid and reliable, and provide specific scores:

- WISC/WAIS or Stanford Binet
- CTOPP-2
- TOWRE-2
- GORT-5
- TOWL3 OR 4
- Key Math - 3
- WIAT-3
- WRAML-2
- Nelson-Denny Reading
- LAC-3
- WRAT-4
- Stanford Reading & Math
- Test of Early Written Language
- Test of Early Math Skill
- Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension

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What's in a Neuropsychological Evaluation?

- Specific language skills - word retrieval and auditory processing
- Auditory and visual memory skills
- Attention/persistence
- Fine motor/motor planning skills
- Executive functioning skills
- Tasks of development, coordination and processing (for younger children)



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What Do You Learn From an Neuropsychological Evaluation?

- Does your child have the necessary skills to meet expectations in a classroom
- "Learning to learn" skills
- Diagnosis of a specific learning disability



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Finished Cake

- A full evaluation should include all 3 areas: cognitive, academic and neuropsychological skills
 - Cognitive skills are the ingredients
 - Neuropsychological skills are the tools
 - Academic skills are the baked layers
 - Mastery is the finished cake



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What Will You Learn from a Speech/Language Evaluation?

- How well your child understands what he hears
- How well he can express his thoughts and ideas
- How well he remembers what he hears
- How complex his language is
- Use of grammar and vocabulary
- Articulation
- Understanding abstract language or figures of speech



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What Will You Learn from an Occupational Therapy Evaluation?

- How well a child's eyes and hands work together
- Dexterity and skill for building and writing
- Ability to copy what he sees with a pencil
- Visual scanning and problem solving skills
- Hand strength
- Analyzing visual patterns and designs
- Printing, handwriting, pencil grip



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What Will You Learn from a Physical Therapy Evaluation?

- Coordination of body parts to complete a physical activity such as running or kicking a ball
- Balance
- Muscle strength
- Posture and trunk control
- Flexibility
- Knowing "position in space" so a child doesn't bump into things



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Why Would You Want a Sensory Integration Evaluation?

- Overreactive to noises, tastes, textures, feel of clothing, or being touched
- Problems filtering noise or visual input appropriately
- Problem with transitions
- Social difficulties such as lack of flexibility
- Avoiding tasks such as bathing, dressing, or hair combing
- Frequent tantrums and being overwhelmed easily



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What's in a Reading Evaluation?

- Sometimes there is only concern about a child's decoding or reading skills
- Testing is more extensive in areas such as sounding out and blending words, vocabulary, fluency, speed, and comprehension
- Often used to diagnose dyslexia



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Does It Matter Who Does the Testing?

- You want to work with the most qualified, most objective, and most helpful professional you can find
- You want someone to tell you and the school the truth about your child's needs

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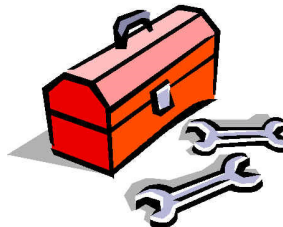
**NOT ALL TESTS
TESTERS
REPORTS
ARE CREATED EQUAL**



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An Independent Evaluation Is Part Of The Toolbox For Parents

- The right evaluation will be:
 - Accurate
 - Objective
 - Complete
- Evaluator will support and work with parents



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REMEMBER:

- Knowledge is power
- Parents are the experts on their children
- Your choices will help Make School Work for your child

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