

# BEST PRACTICES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT



<p><b>When to Assess (Child Find):</b> (1) Does this child meet the “relatively low” threshold of having a suspected disability and (2) might he or she need special education?</p>	<p><b>Ask Yourself:</b> (1) is the child struggling academically, socially, or behaviorally (2) has a parent expressed concern verbally or in writing, (3) has a teacher or service provider expressed concerns about the child, (4) is the child receiving services or being assessed outside of school, (5) is the child a Regional Center client?</p>
<p><b>Assess in all areas of suspected need:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Cognition</li> <li>b. Memory</li> <li>c. Attention</li> <li>d. Executive Function</li> <li>e. Auditory Processes</li> <li>f. Visual Processes</li> <li>g. Visual/Motor Processes</li> <li>h. Communication</li> <li>i. Autism</li> <li>j. Sensory Processes</li> <li>k. Gross/Fine Motor</li> <li>l. Inclusion</li> <li>m. Academics</li> <li>n. Social-Emotional</li> <li>o. Aide services</li> <li>p. Mental Health</li> <li>q. Behavior, including Functional Behavior</li> <li>r. Health/Medical (including hearing and vision)</li> <li>s. Adaptive Skills</li> <li>t. Vocational Skills</li> <li>u. Assistive Technology</li> <li>v. Low Incidence Needs</li> <li>w. Dyslexia</li> <li>x. Other?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment/Assessor Should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Ensure all items on assessment plan/suspected areas of disability are assessed;</li> <li>&gt; Use instruments not racially, culturally, or sexually discriminatory;</li> <li>&gt; Be administered in language likely to yield accurate information;</li> <li>&gt; Be administered in form likely to yield accurate information;</li> <li>&gt; Use valid and reliable measure(s); (no IQ testing when assessing African-American students);</li> <li>&gt; Be administered by trained personnel;</li> <li>&gt; Be done by an assessor knowledgeable about student’s disability;</li> <li>&gt; Be tailored to address specific areas of need;</li> <li>&gt; Include findings not based on a single general intelligence quotient;</li> <li>&gt; Accurately reflect aptitude;</li> <li>&gt; Accurately reflect achievement level;</li> <li>&gt; Use multiple measures or assessments;</li> <li>&gt; Include observation in appropriate settings (particularly classroom setting);</li> <li>&gt; Include relevant records review;</li> <li>&gt; Include parent interviews/input;</li> <li>&gt; Include teacher interviews/input;</li> <li>&gt; Utilize the latest assessment editions;</li> <li>&gt; Include tests and protocols administered in accordance with instructions;</li> <li>&gt; Include correct scoring of all protocols;</li> <li>&gt; Obtain basal point &amp; ceiling point for relevant tests;</li> <li>&gt; Correctly administer timed assessments;</li> <li>&gt; Appropriately document start and stop times for timed assessments; and,</li> <li>&gt; Convert raw scores to standard scores appropriately.</li> </ul>

**Assessment Reports Should:**

- > Identify need for special education and related services and basis for determination using current eligibility criteria;
- > Discuss relevant behavior during observation;
- > Provide analysis of test scores and not simply summarize;
- > Discuss the relationship of behavior to academic and social functioning;
- > Discuss relevant medical, health and developmental findings, if any;
- > For Specific Learning Disability (SLD), note basis on which student is eligible (i.e. severe discrepancy, response to intervention (RTI), or pattern of strengths & weaknesses);
- > Discuss effects of environmental, cultural and/or economic disadvantage, where appropriate;
- > For students with low incidence disabilities, discuss need for specialized services;
- > For students with low incidence disabilities, discuss need for specialized materials and/or equipment;
- > Be well written, signed, dated and page numbered, translated into parent’s primary language, if necessary;
- > Explain analysis and findings and not leave out points that warrant discussion; and,
- > If appropriate, make service recommendation, frequency and duration should be left to IEP team.

**DISCLAIMER:** As the information contained herein is necessarily general, its application to a particular set of facts and circumstances may vary. For this reason, this document does not constitute legal advice. We recommend that you consult with your counsel prior to acting on the information contained herein.  
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