

My Child's Special Education Testing is Hard to Understand

Special Education Assessments must include a variety of ways to gather information about your child, such as individual testing, information from parents and professionals, grades, STAAR tests, observations, and work samples. Test scores often play an important role in the assessment and can be confusing!

Some 'basics' to remember:

- Put in writing a request to have copies of any assessments BEFORE the IEP meeting. This gives you time to read the report and make a list of questions.
- Each evaluation should include all test scores, a statement noting if the tests were valid and a written summary of the meaning of the scores and how your child was during the testing. Recommendations on what to do are also important.
- You can ask questions before, during or after the meeting!
- Ask staff to explain testing terms you don't understand.
- Know who did which test, what they were testing and what the testing showed.

Who does the testing?

- School Psychologists evaluate cognitive ability (I.Q testing), social-emotional well-being, attention skills and behavioral issues.
- Resource Specialists or Special Day Class (SDC) teachers do academic testing, primarily looking at reading, math and written expression. SDC teachers may also focus on assessing life skills.
- Several professionals can test perceptual or processing skills such as auditory and visual processing (how the brain uses what it hears and sees) and visual-motor skills (how the brain coordinates visual input with a motor response).
- Speech/Language Specialists, Occupational Therapists and Mental Health providers are others that may test your child depending on suspected disability.


What does the scoring terminology mean?

Tests are scored in a variety of ways. Understanding the scores helps you know more about your child's strengths and areas of need.

- **Standard Score:** A 100 standard score is the same as a 50% score. This is not the same as classroom tests where 100 can be a perfect score. Standard scores are often used for the "Broad" or "Full Scale" Scores, meaning the overall score.
- **Scaled Score:** A 10 scaled score is the same as a 50% score. Scaled scores are often used with sub-tests.
- **Percentile Rank:** Shows where a child is relative to 100 other students. If you think of 100 students standing in line according to how well they did on a test, and your child receives a 60% rank, that means that 40 students out of 100 scored better than her and she scored better than 59 other students.
- **T-Scores:** Are often used in emotional or behavior rating scales. Unlike academic or ability test scores, T-scores that are high or low may indicate an area of concern. For each test using a T-score, ask for an explanation as their meaning may vary.

A chart can help you plot your child's scores, allowing you to compare scores to one another and to other students for whom the tests are designed (standardization). **Remember, ask questions** – professionals are more than willing to help you better understand your child's tests.

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