

FDLRS Record

Newsletter for the University of Florida FDLRS program in Jacksonville

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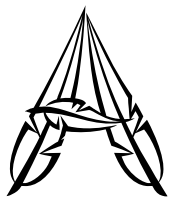
**WHAT IS
PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL
TESTING?**

AND MORE



Intro to Psychoeducational Testing

By Shannon Knagge



psychoeducational assessment is often requested by parents, school staff, and doctors in an effort to better understand the educational needs of a particular student and yield recommendations to impact specific strengths and weaknesses.

School psychologists receive extensive training in assessment that is relevant to the educational needs of students and in then relating the assessment results to the actual instruction of the students. With so many potentially relevant factors influencing what a student has learned and how he or she does so, the entire psychoeducational process maintains focus by answering these very specific questions: Does the student have a learning disability? Does the student have an intellectual deficiency? Are there attentional problems? Are there behavioral problems or emotional issues? Are there health problems? What are the student's academic strength and weaknesses? What are the student's cognitive abilities, strengths, and weaknesses? What are effective educational recommendations? What are appropriate accommodations? Answering these questions can be a big step in the right direction for a struggling student.

Compiling data is the first step in the psychoeducational assessment process. Data comes from a variety of sources, old and new. First, school psychologists access the student's background information, their academic records, and any previous psychoeducational testing that may have occurred. Next, they examine any accessible health records and diagnoses, observe the student, interview parents and/or teachers. From there, school psychologists may administer behavioral/social/emotional rating scales and other measures, examine adaptive functioning, administer standardized measures of intelligence, cognitive processing, and academic achievement, and, if necessary, request further assessment from other specialists, like speech and language pathologists, physical or occupational therapists and ABA therapists. All of this data is compiled and integrated, while focusing on the specific questions that need to be answered. Once the data is analyzed and questions are answered, it leads the school psychologist to the development of appropriate recommendations and accommodations to help the student to learn to the best of his or her abilities. Because implementation is key, school psychologists are also available to consult with parents and school staff about putting recommendations and accommodations into place and monitoring their effectiveness.

Psychoeducational assessment is a valuable tool for parents, educators, and doctors when it comes to learning about and meeting the educational needs of a student. Understanding the process and what can be gained from it allows everyone involved to more effectively utilize the information yielded from quality assessment. The ultimate goal is to benefit students. Understanding and applying important knowledge about the student accomplishes just that.



OUR SERVICES

Who we Serve:

- Individuals between the ages of 3 & 22 who have not graduated high school.
- Who are struggling in school and have complicated medical, behavioral, developmental, &/or social histories
- And who reside in Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, & St. Johns counties

Services for Families:

- Comprehensive, multidisciplinary assessment, which may include psychoeducational, emotional-behavioral, &/or developmental pediatric evaluations
- Feedback sessions and a report detailing our findings
- Assistance in planning for your child's educational and psychological needs
- Trainings for parents covering a variety of topics

Services for the Community:

- Training/consultations for educators, students, & other professionals
- Educational consultation and support services: This can include collaboration with school personnel to facilitate school placement & provision of services

Study Strategies of the Effective Learner

By Carolyn Fagen

One of the biggest challenges many parents face is having a child who is struggling in school. Oftentimes, the reason for a child's poor school performance is a lack of organizational skills and knowledge of effective study strategies. How many parents have thrown their hands up in frustration when they discover their child received a zero on an assignment that was completed but not turned in? Virtually all parents can think of a time when their child could have aced a failed test if she not only remembered to study but also knew the best way to prepare. What many of us fail to realize is that most children are not naturally organized, know how to prioritize, take notes effectively, read with a purpose, apply effective study strategies when preparing for a test, or know how to take a test well. Equipping our children with the knowledge and skills necessary to stay on top of schoolwork and prepare for quizzes and tests should be a top priority of both educators and parents.

So how can we help our children perform better in school? We can teach them

The 5 P's of a Proactive Learner:

1. **Plan**
2. **Prepare**
3. **Prioritize**
4. **Perform**
5. **Present.**

Good students know that in order to be successful in their studies they have to *plan* well. This means that they are well aware of their assignments and use their student planners effectively. Some ideas for improving a planner system include using a paperclip to block off past dates, writing with a different color pen for each subject, flagging future important dates, and including extracurricular activities and other events that may conflict with homework and study time. Next, successful learners *prepare* well. They use checklists or other means to ensure that necessary books, study guides, and papers are brought home and are easy to access. Good students also know how to *prioritize* assignments. Many students like to quickly complete easier assignments before moving on to more difficult ones, while preferring to save studying for the evening hours. Writing each assignment or study task on a post-a-note and ordering those post-a-notes is yet another way children can learn how to prioritize. The next tip, *perform*, seems quite

obvious; however, some students have not learned how to be active learners and often tune out during homework or study time. Setting small goals of accomplishing individual tasks and using a timer can be a useful strategy to ensure students are more engaged in learning than they are with what is going on outside. The final strategy, *present*, refers to creating systems to remember to turn in assignments and making sure these assignments are aligned with the criteria given by the teacher. Many teachers give students rubrics for long-term assignments, so expectations of the final product are very clear. Have you ever seen your child review the rubric before turning in an assignment? Does your child know what he is required to know for a test and how he will be assessed? Using study guides, notes, and creating sample tests could help your child perform better on evaluations.

Our roles as parents and educators should be to teach students organizational tips and study strategies, provide oversight and encouragement, and troubleshoot when problems arise. If we teach our students effective learning strategies but do not ensure they are being used, these strategies will be quickly forgotten. Many parents choose one day a week when they go over the student planner with their child, review upcoming projects and tests, purge unnecessary papers, and organize notebooks and planners. Rewarding your child for writing everything neatly in her planner and staying on top of her homework may encourage your child to continue using organizational tools and study strategies. Most schools offer on-line systems where parents can check their children's progress in every class. Parents should check these sites regularly to ensure that their child is turning in assignments and making satisfactory grades on quizzes and tests. Contacting the classroom teacher when problems start to arise is much more beneficial for the child than waiting until the end of a nine weeks or quarter. If after all these support systems are in place and a child is still performing poorly, parents may need to confer with the classroom teacher and seek the advice of a pediatrician. Anxiety, ADHD, poor teacher-student fit, unrealistic or unclear classroom expectations, and learning problems are all issues that may be impeding your child's progress. Good organizational skills and effective study strategies still benefit children who may be suffering from one of the above issues.

Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System



Tips for IEPs

Does meeting with your child's IEP team at school provoke feelings of anxiety? This does not have to be an anxiety provoking situation. Remember that it takes a village to raise a child, and it takes a team to educate a student. Remember that everyone wants to help your child. Be positive and willing to listen. Keep in mind that the little Johnny that you see at home may not be the same little Johnny that the teachers see at school. No one is wrong; their view is just different. So here are some helpful tips to make the meeting go smoothly (Moody, 2010):

Anxiety can be minimized if parents are well-prepared for the IEP meeting. Before the meeting, ask your school representative who will attend the meeting and ask if you may have a copy of the IEP draft, assessment results, and an outline of available services.

During the meeting, ask educators to share positive information about your child in addition to your child's weaknesses. This can help you build rapport with educators and open the line for communication.

Ask questions if you are unclear about goals and interventions, if you disagree with what is being documented, or if you feel your child's needs are not adequately being addressed. Conflict can be uncomfortable, but active parent participants may feel more satisfied with their child's educational programming.

Invite people who might be informative or provide emotional support (e.g., family member, translator, specialist).

Finally, have a positive attitude and be ready to find solutions. Try not to use the words 'no' or 'can't.' These words tend to stop the conversation. Try, "I understand that you can't do this, but is there another way we can accomplish this goal without adding more work for you?"

Reference: Moody, K. (2010). Empowering families to be collaborative participants in IEP meetings. *Childhood Education*, 87(2), 129-130.

TIPS FROM FDLRS

- Establish early on a system for communicating with your child's teacher. Whether it's through e-mail, a daily note in your child's planner, or a quick conversation in the carpool lane, ongoing communication between home and school is an essential component to ensuring a successful school year!
- Don't wait until your child is failing before communicating with your teacher. It may be time to start RTI or review and implement the Section 504 or IEP. Don't know what these things are? It is very important that you learn. Knowledge is power. So check out some of the resources listed below.



Resources

- Florida's Multi-Tiered System of Supports Parent Resources:
<http://www.florida-rti.org/parentResources/floridaTools.htm>
- FLDOE & USF's Problem Solving & Response to Intervention (RTI) project website:
<http://floridarti.usf.edu/>
- Response to Intervention (RTI) Action Network Resources for Parents and Families:
<http://www.rtinetwork.org/parents-a-families>
- Wrightslaw: accurate, reliable information about special education law:
<http://www.wrightslaw.com/>
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities:
<http://nichcy.org/>

Spring is just around the corner. It's time to look forward to longer days, gorgeous weather, and beautiful blooms. Of course, let's not forget about FCAT! How this little acronym brings about feelings of fear and stress in many educators, parents, and children. The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, otherwise known as FCAT, is intended to measure student mastery of Florida's educational standards.



For most families, there really is no cause for alarm. Students who have been actively engaged in the learning process and have been able to perform according to grade level standards in Florida's public schools should be well prepared for success. Unless otherwise indicated by your child's classroom teacher, your child should be well-equipped for the FCAT without needing special coaching or intensive instruction. The best way you as a parent can help your child achieve success on the FCAT is to offer support and encouragement *throughout the school year*. This includes keeping in constant communication with your child's teachers, encouraging your child to read on a daily basis, helping your child organize a plan for completing assignments, reviewing your child's homework each night, and monitoring your child's school performance. Most schools now offer an on-line parent access system to help you be more aware of your child's current grades.

Keep in mind that the weeks leading up to FCAT should be spent in reviewing and reinforcing skills, not attempting to teach new concepts. One fun way that students can review skills is to play interactive games available on *FCAT Explorer*. Your child's teacher may be able to give you a sign-in name and password to access programs at www.fcatexplorer.com. If you are not doing so already, begin preparing for best performance by making sure your child gets adequate rest each night and eats a nutritious breakfast each morning. For those students whose mornings are fraught with disorganization and chaos, encourage school readiness the night before (laying out clothes, homework packed, pencils sharpened). Peaceful routines have a powerful impact on overall test performance. Most importantly, remind your child that his or her self-worth is not dependent on the test score and encourage a positive attitude about the test. Communicate confidence so that your child will enter the classroom prepared and relaxed the day of testing.

<http://Fcat.fldoe.org> - This site leads parents to general information regarding the FCAT, including how students with disabilities participate in the statewide assessment program. Commonly asked questions with scroll down answers are provided.

www.fcatexplorer.com - FCAT Explorer offers practice activities for students and valuable information to help parents understand the FCAT.

TIPS FROM FDLRS

- Holidays are here and wondering how you can keep your child learning while they are off from school? What about baking for the holidays? It is fun and your child will be learning the entire time. They will learn reading by reading the recipe. They are learning math by counting and measuring the ingredients. Best of all at the end you get to eat what you have learned!!!!
- ADHD is a commonly diagnosed disorder in school-age children. Inattention and impulsivity can cause significant difficulties in both in home and school settings. Individuals with ADHD thrive in a structured environment with consistent, positive discipline. Check out the resources below to learn more about how you can help pave the way for your child to succeed. Or better yet, attend one of our upcoming FDLRS trainings where you will be given the opportunity to learn more about ADHD, how it is treated, and what you can do to manage the behavioral challenges associated with ADHD.

Resources

- Children with Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder – CHADD : www.chadd.org
- Attention-Deficit Disorder Association – ADDA: www.add.org
- National Information Center for Children and Youth – NICHCY: www.nichcy.org and www.nichcy.org/resources/behaviorhome.asp

Want to promote friendships between your child with a disability and his or her peers? Two keys to promoting friendships include 1) ensuring close proximity to peers and 2) creating frequent opportunities for the children to interact (Eason & Whitbread, 2006).

See more tips below!

According to Eason and Kinney (2006), there are several ways parents and educators can promote friendships among children with disabilities and their peers. Here are some more tips:



3) Enroll your child in typical community activities—this increases proximity to non-disabled peers.

4) Encourage teachers to be strong role models for children by valuing all students' learning differences and treating all students with respect.

5) Ask teachers to highlight your child's strengths and interests. Finding common interests and talents among students can increase the chance of friendships forming.

6) Request teachers to regularly include the topic of disability awareness into the curriculum. Parents can provide lists of accomplishments of persons with disabilities to be shared.

7) Ask teachers what students seem to be friendly toward your child, and invite these students to afterschool activities with your child.

8) If your child has difficulty using words to communicate, make sure your child has some type of assistive technology to help them communicate with their peers. It's also a good idea to train their non-disabled peers in the assistive technology as well.

9) Sometimes adults can be barriers to friendships. If your child's teaching assistant is with your child most or all of the school day, encourage the assistant to facilitate your child's friendship with peers, rather than focusing on a friendship between the assistant and your child.

10) Social interactions can be particularly difficult if your child has difficulty demonstrating social skills. Ask your child's educational team what social skills they see your child is missing, and ask when and how those specific social skills can be taught (e.g., smiling, complimenting, turn-taking).

11) Ensure your house has fun toys to attract kids over for fun-filled play dates. It's okay to ask other children about preferences in toys.

12) Keep your child's fashion appropriate. Although it's not fair to judge someone by the way they look, some kids may think that someone who 'looks cool' is cool.

RtI

Like most businesses and fields of study, education is full of buzzwords and acronyms that are ever-changing and difficult for those outside the field to understand. Terms such as *RtI* and *MTSS* are often used when discussing the academic or behavioral needs of individual students. What do these terms mean and how do they address the needs of the struggling learner?

Florida's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a term used to describe high-quality, evidenced-based teaching, incorporating data-based problem solving into instruction and intervention. In this model, instruction is provided at varying levels of intensity depending on a student's needs. Within the MTSS system is a three-tiered framework that uses increasingly more intense instruction and intervention to match a student's need. Tier 1 refers to instruction provided to *all* students and is often referred to as the core curriculum. Students who show a need for additional help may receive supplemental instruction or support in tier 2. This type of instruction often occurs in a small group setting and may or may not be administered by the child's classroom teacher. If a child continues to struggle with learning goals, more intensive instruction offered through tier 3 may be deemed necessary. Tier 3 often occurs one-on-one and instruction is most often provided by the classroom teacher or other highly-qualified educator. Throughout this three-tiered process, teams within the school continually engage in an on-going planning and problem solving process, often working diligently to address the following four issues

with individual students:

- 1) What is the problem?
- 2) Why is it occurring?
- 3) What are we going to do about it?
- 4) Is it working?

Although many schools within the state of Florida opt to refer to the three-tiered approach to instruction as *RtI* (Response to Intervention), the Department of Education states that the term *MTSS* is a more accurate way of referring to this framework. *RtI* is better used to refer to the 4th step of the problem solving process, *Is it working?* Through *RtI*, data may be used to determine how the student is "responding" to the intervention. Keeping in mind students may move throughout tiers, analyzed data is used to determine the level of intensity and instruction required for a child to be successful in the classroom.

If your child is struggling in the classroom in a particular subject, it is recommended you talk to your child's teacher immediately. Express your concerns and ask for data that reflects your child's progress. Work with your child's teacher and administration to determine if more intensive instruction is needed. Once interventions are in place, ask for progress monitoring to determine if interventions are working. Be willing offer support at home and participate actively in conferences.

Much of the information for this article was found on the Department of Education website. For additional assistance, please refer to www.florida-rti.org.

By Carolyn Fagen

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Summer Learning

Welcome the days of sleeping in, summer camps, and trips to the beach followed by sunburn and afternoon thunderstorms. Backpacks thrown on the floor in jubilation are still stuffed with endless graded papers, desk remnants and incomplete workbooks, while summer reading books remain uncracked. Is it any wonder why most children lose two to three months of previous learning during the summer? So, what's a parent to do? How can you prevent 'brain drain' and still allow freedom and down time during the summer break? Summer is a great time to think outside the box about what is meant by learning and get creative with engaging experiences for your child. Creating a realistic, simple plan for those academic activities that must be completed, such as summer reading, is more likely to be followed with consistency and success than a grandiose plan that is overwhelming for both you and your child. The following are a few ideas that may assist you in your summer learning adventures:



- Have your child create a scrapbook of activities he or she participates in this summer. Include items such as pictures, brochures, and movie tickets. Have your child write captions or journal entries about each activity.
- Help your child select an age-appropriate game that he or she has never played before. Have your child read the directions and 'teach' you how to play the game.
- Make a recipe together and encourage your child to read the ingredient listing with correct fractional amounts as well as the step-by-step directions. Start with simpler treats and move on to more difficult meals. From this, your child can then create a menu for a special family meal.
- Extend the meal making activity to a fun family night. Pick a country and learn interesting facts about that country. Together, you and your child can make a meal based on that country. Your child can share learned information during dinner. After dinner, you can play new games that have been learned over the summer.
- Let your child pick out special stationary for letter writing over the summer. Depending on the age of your child, you may need to provide him or her with stamped and addressed envelopes of people your child would like to write. Set a goal of writing one person a week.
- If you are away from your child for a large portion of the day, journal back and forth to one another. Make a game of the journal writing activity by 'hiding' the journal in silly places that the recipient must find.
- Have your child put on a show for family members or friends based on his or her interests. Ideas include a play, a magic show, and an art gallery night. Extend this to a writing activity by having your child make invitations for the event.
- Work with your child to create a list of things to do during down time. Within this list include activities such as word searches, puzzles and brain teasers. Have a basket or bucket filled with items like these to encourage your child to think past, "I have nothing to do."
- Create incentives to motivate your child to read or complete necessary school work. For example, five hours of reading can be exchanged for a play date or a trip to the beach. Have your child help you with ideas he or she would like to work towards achieving.

Remember: It's okay for your child to be bored! Most likely, you will have to remind yourself of this fact several times over the summer. Allowing your child to be bored helps him or her to problem solve and think creatively. Television and video games should not be the fall-back plan every time your child says, "Mom, I'm bored!"

The Disabled Children's Relief Fund (DCRF):

The Disabled Children's Relief Fund (DCRF) is a nonprofit organization that provides children with disabilities assistance to obtain wheelchairs, orthopedic braces, walkers, lifts, hearing aids, eyeglasses, medical equipment, physical therapy, and surgery. Children with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spastic quadriplegia, encephalitis, rheumatoid arthritis, spina bifida, Down's syndrome and other disabilities are eligible to receive assistance. DCRF focuses special attention on helping children throughout the United States that do not have adequate health insurance. DCRF grant applications are available online between April and September. Applications may be submitted by families (parent or legal representative) for an individual child or by a nonprofit organization for a small group of children.