



## How to Get a Core Evaluation Through Your School District

If you are concerned that your child is having difficulty in school, you can request *free* core evaluation through your school district, regardless of income or whether your child attends public school. Even if your child has been expelled from public school, attends a private school, or is not yet in school – so long as they are 3 years or older, they are eligible for a full evaluation at the school system’s expense.

A **Core Evaluation** is a battery of tests used to determine whether a child is eligible for services in school. A battery, in psychology, is a group of tests used to characterize an individual’s strengths and weaknesses.

### Steps To Get a Core Evaluation

1. **Make a referral or request for testing to the special education department.** Call the special education office for the school district about your request, and then follow up that request in writing. The school should call you upon receiving your request for evaluation, but the timeframe can vary from state to state.
2. **Start with a pre-evaluation.** This is a meeting between the parents and at least one member of the special education team to discuss the parent’s concerns and types of testing performed at the school. A pre-evaluation conference clarifies information and allows you to meet at least one member of the special education staff before testing. With more information, you and your child are better prepared for what to expect—and therefore more comfortable with the process.
3. **Receive and consent to the school’s written notice.** School districts are required to send you a written notice of the tests it plans to perform as well as the procedural safeguards available to you (i.e., your right to reject testing, confidentiality of records, etc.). You should especially be aware that you can choose to consent to some evaluations but not others. Once you agree to the school’s proposal, you must submit written consent to the school to begin testing.
4. **Testing.** Once the school has received parental consent, Federal law mandates that the evaluation be completed within a reasonable period of time. Your child should be assessed in all areas of suspected weakness or disability. Therefore, depending on the concerns that initiated your request, more than one type of testing may be needed, often through a multidisciplinary evaluation.

For more resources on learning issues, visit us online: [mghclaycenter.org/topic/learning-issues/](https://mghclaycenter.org/topic/learning-issues/)





## Types of Testing

Often the school system will provide a multidisciplinary evaluation, which is a comprehensive assessment that usually includes several of the following types of tests. Remember, you can choose to consent to some evaluations but not others.

- **Intelligence Testing.** This provides an estimate of your child’s potential for learning. All other test scores from the school’s team evaluation should be compared to your child’s estimated potential in order to find relative strengths and weaknesses. This then helps to determine the need for services from the school.
- **Educational/Achievement Testing.** A series of different tests performed to measure a child’s academic skills in various subject areas—such as reading, math, and writing—to see at what grade level your child’s skills are.
- **Psychological Testing.** A psychologist should perform this evaluation, which includes an assessment of your child’s emotional, social, and behavioral functioning. This could include class observation, recess/lunchtime observation, parent and teacher rating scales, child self-report tests, and projective tests such as the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), drawings, or sentence-completion tests.
- **Speech and Language Testing.** This evaluation assesses your child’s ability to speak clearly, and to understand and express himself through language. Social communication skills called “pragmatics,” which include eye contact, initiating social contact, turn-taking in conversation, and gestures, should also be assessed.
- **Occupational Therapy Testing.** An occupational therapist will observe and evaluate your child’s fine and gross motor skills, visual-spatial/visual-motor skills, sensory processing/integration skills, and general self-help skills.
- **Physical Therapy Testing.** This evaluation is usually necessary for assessing a child’s balance, gross-motor coordination, muscle strength, and movement.
- **Home Assessments.** An assessment of pertinent family history and home situation factors—such as parental divorce, living arrangements, and the like—is often done as part of the school district’s evaluation. Home visits are sometimes made by a special education team member, and the child’s complete developmental history is taken through parent interviews. Estimates of adaptive behavior at home, school, and in the community are also made using interviews and certain measures such as the Vineland or ABAS.
- **Vision/Hearing/General Health Assessments.** Though most pediatricians will perform these evaluations, the school system is available to perform vision screens, hearing tests, and physicals for children.

These evaluations can give you a sense of what your child’s current limitations may be and may estimate what kinds of problems your child could encounter down the road. Most important, the main purpose of a core evaluation is to come up with solutions to any challenges by recommending the right kinds of supports and interventions.

**Thanks for all you do to support a young person in your life. It really makes a difference.**

