

Cognitive/Psycho-educational Assessment
An Interview with
Licensed Educational Psychologist Perry Passaro, Ph.D.

Learning Centers use a wide range of academic assessments to gauge the *achievement level* of students. Some centers also provide assessment of certain cognitive processes. Such assessment procedures are sufficient for children who are experiencing short-term challenges during their school years. Children who are experiencing significant, long term cognitive challenges can benefit from having a comprehensive psycho-educational assessment performed by a licensed educational psychologist. The resulting report can serve as a basis for planning an educational program that effectively meets a student's unique learning profile.

The following interview with educational psychologist **Perry Passaro, Ph.D.** sheds some valuable light on this process:

Team: What is psycho-educational assessment?

Dr. Passaro: Psycho-educational assessment involves the administration and interpretation of the cognitive, academic, social and emotional measures needed to understand an individual's unique strengths and needs.

Team: Who should consider a psycho-educational assessment?

Dr. Passaro: Individuals with concerns involving cognitive processing (attention, memory, and perception), academic achievement, overall development, and psychological/social functioning are appropriate candidates for assessment.

TEAM: Why should I consider psycho-educational assessment?

The benefits of such an evaluation provide: "an abundance of valuable information about a student's functioning that cannot be obtained in any other way. A child's overt symptoms may have one or more underlying etiologies and just treating the symptoms could have a negative effect if the wrong treatment is chosen." (Hale and Fiorello, 2004)

TEAM: How does the process work?

Dr. Passaro: During the first session a review of prior history, current strengths and areas of concern are discussed. The "out of session" work, such as behavior rating scales, is usually assigned at this meeting and is to be completed by the student, parents and teachers. Subsequent sessions will involve working directly with your child for one to two hours at a time. Two to three such sessions may be needed to complete the process. An observation of the student at school, as well as an interview with the student's classroom teacher may be

added to the process of four to six hours of testing, test scoring, report writing, and an interview with the parents to present findings and recommendations.

TEAM: [What happens after the assessment?](#)

[Dr. Passaro](#): Parents may consider presenting the report to their local education agency with the goal of requesting appropriate services based upon mutually developed goals and objectives. Working in cooperation parents and the school's Individualized Education Program Team (IEPT) should determine recommendations, eligibility for special services, and appropriate school placement. Such a report can also be extremely useful when students are enrolled in special education programs at private schools.

TEAM: [What about cost management?](#)

[Dr. Passaro](#): The family's health insurance policy may provide some or all the coverage for this type of service. If an "out of network provider" is chosen, the psychologist will generally provide the family with a bill summary which indicates dates, services, and fees paid so that benefits can be applied for. Furthermore, you can request a similar assessment at no charge through your local school district.

TEAM thanks [Dr. Passaro](#) for participating in this informational interview. [Dr. Passaro](#) practices in Orange County, CA. You can read more about him on his website: drpassaro.com.