

Receiving the results of your child's special education evaluation

The evaluation results meeting will follow either an initial evaluation or a reevaluation.¹

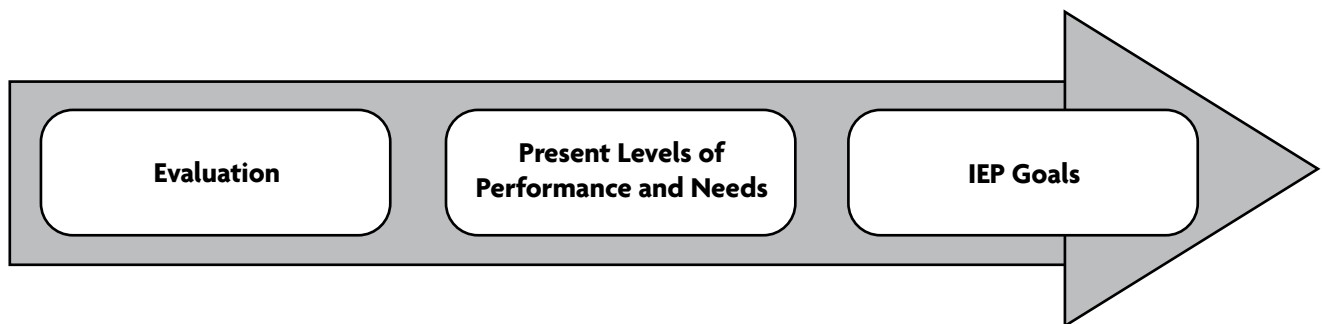
- The initial or first evaluation determines whether a child meets state criteria for eligibility, and as a result, qualifies for special education and related services
- Each reevaluation determines whether the child needs continuing special education services

In both cases, an evaluation plan is developed after discussion between school district staff and parents. The school must provide the parents with the evaluation results within 30 school days of the date the parents signed the consent to evaluate form.

Schools usually schedule an in-person meeting with the parents to discuss the evaluation results, but a phone or other type of conference may also work. Parents may ask to discuss the evaluation and, for eligible children, develop the IEP (Individualized Education Program) at two separate meetings. This gives you the opportunity to be sure you understand and agree with the evaluation report before moving to the development of an IEP.

At a minimum, the evaluation summary report will include:

- A summary of all evaluation results
- A record of whether the child has a specific category of disability or, in the case of reevaluation, whether the pupil continues to have such a disability
- The child's present levels of performance and educational needs that result from the disability
- Whether the child needs special education and related services or, in the case of a reevaluation, whether the child continues to need special education and related services
- Whether any additions or changes to the special education and related services are needed to help the child meet the measurable annual goals in the IEP and to participate, as appropriate, in the general curriculum



As you can see from the graphic, it is important to be sure the evaluation report is complete and accurate because your child's education program will be based on the evaluation results. It can be helpful to compare it to the building of a house. Just as the building of a house follows a logical order, beginning with a foundation or basement and ending with the roof, so does the building of a special education program. In this example, an important part of the foundation is special education evaluation.

¹ For more information about evaluation, see PACER's handout "Evaluation: What Does it Mean for Your Child?" <https://media.pacer.org/php/php-c2.pdf>

The report should identify the things your child does well in addition to those they find are difficult. Sometimes the results can be difficult to receive. Parents like to think positively about their children, what they are good at and interested in, and how they are making progress. This evaluation report should include the positive, but the emphasis will be on the areas of need. A good way to think about it is: It is important that I focus on my child's areas of need. I will expect that this meeting will emphasize my child's disability, and we will be discussing his or her areas of need.

Who will be at the meeting? In addition to the parents, the meeting will include qualified professionals from the school. The group **must** include someone qualified to interpret the evaluation results such as a school psychologist.

Because parents are a part of the team, this will be a key meeting, and it's important to understand the evaluation report. There are two ways to go about this:

- Ask your school contact person, usually your child's IEP case manager or the person who coordinated the initial evaluation, for a copy of the evaluation report prior to the meeting. It is helpful to review the results in advance but keep in mind that the report's language may change after the team discussion. Although the school is not required to share the report with you before the meeting, they may be willing to do so
- You may read and review the report at the meeting with the evaluation team. You may take notes on the report and participate in the discussion

Be sure to take home the report and reread it carefully, and keep in mind that the special education evaluators tried to capture an accurate and complete picture of your child at school. As you look at the report, ask yourself if it tells you:

- What your child is good at
- Their strengths in areas such as reading or math, getting along with others, sports, hobbies, or friendships
- Their interests
- Your concerns regarding education
- Areas in which your child is having challenges compared to their typical peers
- If any accommodations are necessary

It is a good idea to read the report from start to finish, and ask yourself:

- Does this seem like an accurate and true picture of my child?
- Do I see the same needs and strengths when I think about how my child functions on a day-to-day basis?
- Does anything in the report surprise me?
- Is anything of significance missing?
- Does the report accurately reflect my concerns as a parent?
- Does the report contain facts and not opinions?
- When I receive report cards from regular education, are the results similar?

Be sure to ask questions or highlight any areas you may think are not accurate or are incomplete.

Receiving results of an evaluation may lead to questions you may ask the evaluation team. For example:

- What does a score of 54 mean on that test?
- What does "average" mean?
- Why is this task so difficult (or easy) for my child?
- Is this statement on page__ an opinion or a fact?
- This test result seems too high (or too low); what other test could be given to verify the results?
- I don't see anything in the report about __. What assessment could be given in that area so that the results of the evaluation are complete?

- I have a concern about ___. Could that be added to the report?
- An outside evaluation stated that ___. Could this be added to the report?
- Could we reword the statement on page ___ so that I can agree with it?

After the questions are answered satisfactorily and you agree with the report, the evaluation process is complete. There are several possibilities for the next step:

- If your child qualifies for special education services for the first time, and you agree that your child needs special education services, an IEP team which includes you will meet to develop the special education program for your child
- If your child is eligible for the first time, **but** you do not wish your child to receive services, an IEP will not be developed until you agree that your child needs services
- If this is a reevaluation and your child continues to qualify for special education services, the IEP will be updated to include the new information from the evaluation
- If your child does not qualify, you may wish to discuss Section 504 eligibility and accommodations. For more information about Section 504, call PACER Center or ask your school district

If you do not agree with the report, see PACER's handout:

I Have Concerns about the Results of My Child's Special Education Evaluation: What Can I Do?

<https://media.pacer.org/php/php-c278.pdf>