

What You Should Know About School Evaluations

By Kristin Lance, Advocate
The Arc of Aurora | 720-213-1420

Evaluations are the foundation of determining eligibility for Special Education services and for continued eligibility if a student has an existing Individualized Education Plan (IEP). School evaluations must be conducted in all areas related to the suspected disability including cognitive, social/emotional, physical/health, physical/motor, communication, academics and life skills (typically older students). In addition, a variety of tools and measures must be utilized during the evaluations in order to gather appropriate and accurate data. Tools and measures can include, but are not limited to, observation, work samples, interview, behaviors charts/records, external evaluations, report cards and standardized tests. Please keep in mind that the school only has to take into consideration any external evaluations provided by the parents. In other words, the school is not required by law to implement any of the recommendations or include any of the diagnosis from external evaluations in the IEP process. The school evaluations should be conducted by a trained professional and include information from the parent, teachers and any other appropriate service providers both in school and out of school. There are several types of school evaluations that are utilized during the IEP process including:

Initial Evaluations

- Completed at request of parents and/or school staff
- Used to identify if a student is eligible for Special Education services

Tri-annual Evaluations

- Offered every three years once a student is deemed eligible for Special Education services through an Initial Evaluation
- Used to measure progress and identify current strengths and needs
- A school may decide not to complete any new evaluations during the Tri-annual process because a records review provides the needed information to move forward
- Parents may request new evaluations to be completed during a Tri-annual evaluation, and in most cases the school must complete the requested evaluations

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)

- Completed by a qualified evaluator independent of the school district
- Usually requested by parents if they disagree with the evaluations completed by the school
- School district is responsible for the cost of the IEE
- Parents must choose an evaluator that is able to adhere to the district's guidelines for an IEE

Remember, parents must provide written consent in order for the school to be able to complete any evaluations. In addition, parents are highly encouraged to request a copy of all evaluation reports before the IEP meeting so there is time to review and prepare questions.