

Best Practices For The Communication of Psychological Evaluation Results And Recommendations

In school settings, students are referred for evaluations to school psychologists or other evaluation specialists to help determine their educational needs. Information from psychological evaluations is used by parents and school personnel to answer questions about student achievement and behavior and to plan meaningful educational and other intervention programs. Because of the importance placed on psychological assessments, persons responsible for assessing students in educational settings must possess a variety of professional skills and competencies as determined by appropriate training and credentials. These skills and competencies are employed throughout the evaluation, from preliminary file reviews and observations to the collection of assessment data and the sharing of evaluation results with parents and school personnel.

Typically, students are referred to the school psychologist to answer specific questions regarding their skills and abilities as well as to determine why certain behaviors are or are not occurring. Because each student is unique, the administration of specific assessment methods and instruments is guided by the context of the student's functioning and the reason(s) for the referral. Therefore, in order to report and to interpret the results of the evaluation accurately, it is critical that the context of the assessment be understood and addressed. When assessment information is interpreted by someone other than the person who conducted the evaluation, a substantial loss in interpretive meaning may occur, even when the individual interpreting the evaluation is another school psychologist. For this reason, the school psychologist who did the actual evaluation is the best individual to convey the information in the context of the assessment and to integrate the results of the assessment into meaningful instructional recommendations for parents and school personnel.

The North Carolina School Psychology Association recommends that school administrators and other school personnel should consider the loss of professional expertise, child-specific data, and contextual information that occurs when the school psychologist who conducted the assessment is unable to attend planning, eligibility, or Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings. Written reports typically do not adequately communicate all of the behavior, nonverbal, and anecdotal information that a practitioner observes during assessments and other data collection activities. A similar loss of important information would occur if a substitute teacher were to present the student's performance records in place of the regular classroom teacher. *Consistent with the relevant NASP ethical principle it is, therefore, best practice for the school psychologist who conducted the evaluation to present the results, interpretations, and recommendations at conferences and IEP meetings.* Adherence to this practice will help to ensure that assessment data are interpreted accurately and are clearly understood. The presence of school psychologists and other multi-disciplinary team members at IEP meetings allows for verbal interactions, additional information sharing, and collaboration that contributes to improved decisions and educational program planning to best meet the needs of the individual student.

NCSPA also recommends that if participation at conferences and meetings by the school psychologist who conducted the evaluation is impossible or not feasible, the psychological report should be presented by a similarly qualified psychologist who can discuss it clearly and effectively. In the case of an evaluation completed by a contract psychologist, it is up to the Local Education Agency (LEA) to specify the conditions and scope of the contract psychologist's practice within the terms of his/her contract.

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Reference

Thomas, A. & Grimes, J (2008). NASP Principles for Professional Ethics: Standard IV; D: Reporting Data and Conference Results. *In Best Practices in School Psychology V. (p.xxi)*