

# Educational Psychological Assessments



***My child's school wants them to be assessed by an educational psychologist. Is this really necessary and will it help my child in school?***



The short answer to both of these questions is, “No.” Often parents offer me copies of these reports to read, and I have to tell them that it’s basically a waste of my time and their money. There is nothing that is contained in those reports that tells us why a child struggles or how to correct this; they are more of a commentary on the ‘paint on the fence,’ describing the bubbling, cracking, shivering and peeling we may be observing, but telling us nothing about how they are occurring.

The reason why we get stuck with superficial assessments, superficial therapies, superficial education, superficial understandings, etc is because most of us have our gaze firmly fixed on what is before us. If we have never struggled with day to day activities, then there is probably no reason to ever consider how we walk or talk or do anything else. Most human



beings also have a love affair going on with what they think is going on here, especially the highly intelligent ones but that doesn’t naturally lend itself to looking beneath the surface of the pond and discovering what is causing the ripples on the water’s surface. Rather, it is more likely to result in some highly

imaginative, and incredibly complex and complicated, ideas being dreamed up. I have consistently found that the more courses people have done, the more certificates they have amassed and the more letters they have after their name, the more fundamentalist they tend to be in what they project onto the kids who struggle; but none of it ever tells us anything practical about what has gone wrong for these kids.

Ultimately, these psychological assessments are the epitome of examining the superficial presentation of a child who struggles; or, to put it another way, examining the surface of the lake, whilst knowing nothing of the fish that cause the ripples on the water's surface. While they will provide some functional indicators of perceptual performance ie: pointers to the cause of the child's struggle, they will change nothing of what I do. This is because I do look beneath the surface and, not only to find the fish, but I want to know what type they are and how they are behaving. The only reason I get the outcomes I do with these kids is because I am dealing with the reality of what has gone wrong for them, having long ago abandoned superficial and symptomatic interventions.



Interestingly, I have met many educators throughout the years who also know these assessments, and the lengthy reports they generate, are a pointless waste of time. In the final analysis, I can only say that doing such things are all about education 'appearing to do something, because it really has no idea what to do.' In the long run, the reports will be used by education to deflect attention away from its questionable practices, and to say that the problem is not those practices. Instead, it will say that the problem is these children and for those reasons discovered in those assessments. And, while I happen to agree that education is not the problem when it comes to kids, struggling in school, I most certainly do have a problem with what it does to those kids who do struggle.

In all the years I have been working with kids, I have yet to see one situation where any of these assessments did anything to resolve the child's struggle or change what education did to them. Education will still default to having them practice over and over again, the very tasks they have repeatedly demonstrated they cannot do, and the kids will continue to struggle, just as they will develop significant psychological and emotional issues as a result of this endless practicing.



Fundamentally my position on determining why kids struggle in school or anywhere else in life is this: get them evaluated by someone who knows how we



do what we do, what has been disrupted in these kids and how to fix it. Don't get caught up in anything that involves months or years of practicing, or where you do not see immediate and significant improvements in the child's performance.

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