

What is the Purpose of a Psychoeducational Assessment?

[Dr Christianne Durish] A psychoeducational assessment is really a comprehensive evaluation of a person's functioning across different areas like cognition, academics, social functioning, psychological well-being, maybe adaptive functioning, with the ultimate goal of trying to understand a person's pattern of strengths and weaknesses in order to really help optimize their functioning, whether that be in the classroom, the home, the community.

There's quite a few benefits of doing a psychoeducational assessment. Typically, when people come to us for a psychoeducational assessment, it's usually because there's an area of need, often academic need, maybe the student is underachieving. So the benefit of doing a psychoeducational assessment is to identify what those academic needs are in order to help that student thrive in the school environment, be able to inform the parents and the teachers how to best teach the student in order to get those needs met.

A psychoeducational assessment involves a series of steps, first one being a referral, and then would be a clinical interview, typically with parents, and then the next step would be the standardized testing with the individual, with the student, and then would be questionnaires completed by parents, teachers, and potentially the student, depending on their age and ability level. And then we would have a feedback meeting, which is typically done with parents and sometimes with the child involved as well, depending on their age and ability level, and to summarize it all up into a nice report that parents would then receive.

So a number of different findings can come from a psychoeducational assessment. Mainly, we're trying to identify an individual's pattern of cognitive, academic, and psychosocial strengths and weaknesses or areas of need. And oftentimes, these types of findings can lead to identifying different diagnoses, like a learning disability, or ADHD, or an intellectual disability.

Most often, a student comes to us because there is an area of academic need. Perhaps they're underperforming academically, or they're performing even in the average range, but with an extraordinary amount of effort, they're struggling at school. So they come to a psychologist to better understand what's going on for them from a cognitive and

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academic perspective, and how do we help inform the school and inform parents on ways to help this child thrive.

When a child has difficulties with academic achievement, it can come from so many different sources. And a psychoeducational assessment is really geared towards understanding the root of those challenges. It helps them understand their student better. How do I help my student learn best?

Underachievement is not merely just underachievement because of a learning disability, for example. Underachievement can mean this child is struggling from a behavioral or a social emotional perspective. A psychoeducational assessment is not only designed to look for deficits, but also to look for strengths and teach an educator how to play to that child's strengths and teach them in a manner that helps them thrive.