

# School Testing Vs. Private Testing - What's the Difference?

If you are concerned about your child's academic progress, you have a number of options to consider. So the next thing you may be wondering is:

What's the difference between special education eligibility testing done through the school and testing done through a private evaluation? Other than the sometimes scary cost of a private evaluation.

The key thing to understand is that the goal of special education eligibility testing and private testing are very different. The goals of each are generally outlined as follows:

## Purpose/Goal of Special Education Eligibility Testing

- To evaluate a student in select areas to determine whether the scores in specified areas are low enough to qualify for small group or individualized support through the school (usually 12th percentile or below, meaning that if 100 students took the test your child would need to score worse than 88 or more students to get intervention support through an Individualized Education Program). This isn't a hard and fast number but it is a common number we see schools sticking to in order to determine eligibility services.

## Purpose/Goal of Private Testing

- To get a clear picture of academic strengths and weaknesses
- To create a plan on how best to support a child given the pattern of academic strengths and weaknesses both at home and in the classroom.
- To give parents an understanding of what to expect as their child progresses academically, how to support learning at home, and a diagnosis if appropriate
- To inform whether additional school testing may be appropriate

It is important to note that many of the assessments given through special education eligibility testing and private testing may be the same. But again, the purposes are vastly different.



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The school is using the tests to determine if, at that exact moment in time, the child's scores qualify him or her for additional support.

Private diagnosticians are looking at the history of the child, the current academic performance, and making predictions about what these scores mean long-term for your child.

It's the difference between a snapshot focus (for the school's purpose) and a long-term focus (for a private focus).

Neither the school's testing or private testing is necessarily better or worse than the other. They both serve entirely different purposes so there may be times where it makes sense only to have the school complete testing or only to have private testing completed.

## You must come back to the question - what is my ultimate goal or purpose in pursuing testing?

The answer will help you understand the best options for you.

If you want school-based supports you can complete school-based testing (it still may be advisable to have outside testing to make sure the scores are consistent across settings and to have an outside opinion). Private testing cannot qualify a student for school-based supports alone. The school **MUST** do their own testing as well.

If you want to understand your child's learning profile to understand how best to support him or her at school and at home now and into the future you will want to complete private testing.

