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What Parents Should Know about Educational Diagnostic Testing Administered by Dr. Nancy T. Akins

Your child's teacher, school guidance counselor, or school administrator has recommended having your child tested. You may have been aware of some difficulties, frustrations, and/or inconsistencies in the schoolwork. Perhaps you have put in extensive time helping with homework, and still test scores may not be good. The teacher may have tried giving extra time or modifying some assignments. You and the teacher need more information on how your child learns best. This packet is to help you understand what educational diagnostic testing is and how it will assist you and the teachers in serving your child. It will let you know the steps you are encouraged to take to complete this process.

What is Educational Diagnostic Testing?

Your child's school may have requested full educational diagnostic testing. If this is the case, testing will have several components. One test will measure your child's mental ability (IQ) as compared with hundreds of children his/her own age. In addition to the estimate of mental ability, the test may also reveal your child's preferred learning style (visual, auditory, or hands-on). Extensive academic tests will also be administered in the one-on-one testing sessions. Basic academic skills of reading (silent and oral), spelling, math, and written language will be evaluated on both timed and untimed subtests. Some test items will be easy for your child, but more challenging items will also be given. Your child is not expected to know all the answers, but to give his/her best effort. Diagnostic testing also includes some processing tests. These may include listening tasks, drawing tasks, and other non-academic activities to determine your child's strengths and weaknesses when processing information. This extensive testing usually takes between five to six hours to administer. Therefore, usually three testing sessions of approximately two hours each are scheduled. If a child is noticeably tired after one and one-half hours, the session ends for that day.

If only a portion of educational diagnostic testing is requested, it may include any of the above mentioned types of tests. The cost and time required to complete these tests is based on which ones are requested. Therefore, these details will be discussed at the time you call for your appointment.

Who is the Examiner?

Dr. Nancy T. Akins' educational background includes her B.A. in Elementary Education, M.A. in Guidance and Counseling, and Ed.D. in Early and Middle Childhood. She also completed the course work and internship necessary to be state certified in school psychology.

Dr. Akins' professional experience includes nine years of teaching in the public school system and four years in a private Christian school. She has taught kindergarten, first, second, and fourth grades. While in the private school, she also served as the Assistant Principal, gaining administrative experience. In 1988, Dr. Akins opened a private business in order to provide educational evaluations and educational therapy interventions for students with learning disabilities.

In addition to her educational background and professional experience, Dr. Akins also understands the parent's perspective on a child's learning problems. One of her children was diagnosed in kindergarten as being both Gifted and Learning Disabled.

Dr. Akins brings this range of education, practical experience, and diagnostic testing to assist parents, teachers, administrators, and educational therapists in knowing how to most effectively help children. Suggestions for helping each child become successful might include a variety of teaching techniques, classroom accommodations, and/or specialized educational therapy interventions.

What Steps Need to be Completed?

There are several steps in the process of educational diagnostic testing. Included is a brief description of each step as well as a checklist of the steps, based on what your school has requested. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Dr. Akins' office for further assistance.

Step One

You will be asked to complete the *Permission for Testing*. If more than just the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fourth Edition (WISC-IV) is to be administered by Dr. Akins, the *Student Background Information* should also be completed. The Student Background Information will provide Dr. Akins with information about your child, including family, medical, and educational histories, as well as basic characteristics and concerns you have about your child's academic progress. This Student Background Information remains confidential with the examiner and sensitive personal information is not included in the testing report. General information, such as a "history of ear infections as a young child" or "has received tutorial services," which is pertinent to your child's current educational needs would be mentioned in the report. The completed Student Background Information and Permission for Testing form may be mailed to Dr. Akins or brought to the first testing session.

Step Two

Call Dr. Akins to schedule testing based on the *Testing Referral* provided by the person referring your child for testing. Either Dr. Akins or her assistant will be glad to discuss the testing procedure, answer any questions you may have, and schedule testing. The time needed to complete testing will be based on which tests have been requested by the school or educational therapist. Please avoid scheduling testing sessions when your child would miss a favorite activity or would be distracted by an exciting event immediately before or after testing.

Step Three

After the appointments are scheduled, you will want to discuss testing with your child prior to the first appointment. It is very important to keep the conversation low-anxiety. To help your child feel more at ease, you can let your child know that he/she will be doing various activities with Dr. Akins to find out how he/she learns best. Depending on the age of your child, the conversation may be similar to the following. "I have seen how frustrated you become with _____ (spelling words, math problems, etc.). Your teacher and I want to be sure we're helping you the way you learn best. Dr. Akins has various activities that can give us more information on how to help you better. Some will be like school work and some won't. All you need to do is give her your best try on the things she asks you to do."

Step Four

Prior to testing sessions, try to ensure your child has a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast or lunch. Comfortable clothes are important. You may also want your child to bring a sweater or light jacket. Students do not need to bring any supplies with them. However, if you know your child will need some type of healthy snack or drink for energy during a testing session, it is allowed. Bathroom and stretch breaks are provided during the sessions. When you arrive for your child's testing appointment, Dr. Akins will meet with you and your child for a few minutes. This will allow your child to become comfortable with Dr. Akins and with what will be taking place during the testing sessions. After that initial meeting, your child will accompany Dr. Akins to the room where she will work one-on-one with your child.

Parents are asked to bring the *Permission for Testing, Testing Referral* and if requested, the *Student Background Information* forms, to the first testing session if they were not previously mailed to Dr. Akins. In addition to these forms, payment for testing (check or cash) is also collected at the first session. *Checks should be made payable to Foundation Academy.*

If *Teacher Checklists* are requested (if more than the WISC-IV is administered), your child's teacher(s) is asked to complete this based on his/her observations of your child in the classroom. The Teacher Checklist will be given to parents at the first testing session. Teachers may then mail or fax the completed Teacher Checklist to Dr. Akins.

Step Five

Upon completion of the testing battery, Dr. Akins prepares a full written report describing the tests and your child's performance on those tests. For those who have had the full educational diagnostic testing, a one-hour conference is scheduled, usually within two weeks of the final testing appointment. At that time, Dr. Akins meets with the parents to go over the test results. Students do not attend the conference. If only a portion of testing has been administered, parents have the option of having two copies of the test report sent to the referring school/educational therapist or parents can meet with Dr. Akins to go over the testing results, usually within two weeks of the final testing appointment. Depending on the amount of testing administered, the report may include any recommended educational interventions and suggested classroom accommodations for your child. A list of providers will be given for any recommended educational interventions. A second copy of the report will also be provided for you to give to the school. Please note that your child's test results and recommendations will not be discussed with your child's teacher or school administrators unless you have given the school a copy of the test report or you requested that the reports be mailed to the school.

Dr. Akins is available for additional consultation with the parents, teachers, or administrators, as needed for clarification of recommendations. As mentioned previously, Dr. Akins offers suggestions in her report that may benefit your child in the classroom, but the school administrator has the authority to determine the appropriate implementation of any classroom accommodations.

It is hoped that this information has helped you understand the testing process. Please feel free to contact Dr. Akins or her staff if you have any questions.

Checklist of Steps

For your convenience, please use the following to ensure that you have completed all the necessary steps for the testing procedure.

- Complete the *Permission for Testing*
- Call Dr. Akins to schedule testing (based on the *Testing Referral*)
- Complete the *Student Background Information* (if more than just the WISC-IV is requested)
- Discuss testing with your child
- At the 1st session bring the following (unless previously mailed to Dr. Akins):
 - Permission for Testing*
 - Testing Referral*
 - Student Background Information* (if more than the WISC-IV is given)
 - Payment for testing (made payable to: Foundation Academy)
- Ask teacher(s) to complete the *Teacher Checklist* and mail or fax them to Dr. Akins