

## What is a psychological assessment?

A psychological assessment evaluates thinking, learning, behaviour and/or social-emotional adjustment. The assessment may include interviews, observation, testing, and consultation with other professionals such as your child's teacher(s) or the special education resource teacher.

Before the assessment can take place, the psychologist or psychological associate is required to contact you to explain the assessment in more detail and to obtain your informed consent.

## Why has the school suggested a psychological assessment?

Teachers often refer students who are experiencing significant difficulties at school for a psychological assessment. Students may be having difficulty with reading, writing or math, or they may have difficulty with their feelings or behaviour. A psychological assessment is usually recommended after the school has tried other ways to support a student's learning, but with limited success.

## What skills will be evaluated?

The assessment may include evaluations of: thinking and reasoning ability; memory; visual-motor skills; academic skills; attention /

executive functioning; behaviour / emotional adjustment; adaptive skills.

The assessment also typically includes interviews with parents, teachers and the student, a review of previous report cards and the Individual Education Plan (if applicable), and a review of previous assessments and relevant background information.

## Where does the assessment take place?

The assessment takes place at your child's school, in a quiet room, away from the regular classroom.

## How long does the assessment take?

It usually takes between 5 to 8 hours to administer all of the required test activities to complete an assessment. The type and number of assessment tools used for the assessment depends on your child's age and his or her difficulties at school. Testing is completed over two or more days at school. The student is provided with breaks at the normal recess and lunch times.

## How should I prepare my child?

It is important to talk to children about what will happen before any procedure, including a

psychological assessment. Children typically feel less anxious when they know what to expect. Let your child know that he or she will be spending some time for part of the school day working with a psychologist or psychological associate. Tell your child that the psychologist/psychological associate will ask him or her to complete some activities to get information about how he or she thinks and learns. Tell your child that the psychologist/psychological associate will ask lots of questions, and will have other, more "hands on" activities to do, like puzzles and drawing. Some activities are similar to school work (e.g., reading, math, spelling, writing, etc.).

Most students report that some of the assessment activities are easy and some are hard. Most students also report enjoying the assessment process. It is important, however, not to mislead the student. Avoid using words like "games" or "fun" to describe the assessment activities.

Before getting started, the psychologist or psychological associate will spend some time explaining things to your child and will not proceed unless he or she believes that your child is feeling comfortable with the process.

Make sure that your child has a good night's sleep the night before the assessment and that he or she has had a good breakfast that morning.

If your child is ill on any of the assessment days, it is best to reschedule. It is important for us to see your child when he or she is feeling well. Make sure that the psychologist / psychological associate is aware of any medication that your child is taking. If your child takes medication on a daily basis to help manage AD/HD symptoms, make sure they have had the regular doses.

If your child wears glasses or a hearing aid, make sure he or she is using these on the scheduled assessment days.

## How do I hear about the results?

The psychologist/psychological associate will meet with you to provide you with feedback about your child's results. Usually, these meetings happen at your child's school two to three weeks after the testing is completed. Your child's teacher, special education resource teacher, and the school principal or vice-principal also attend to hear the results, as they pertain to your child's strengths and needs at school. If you would prefer to hear the results individually, prior to meeting at the school, this can be arranged.

Later, you will receive a written report that summarizes the results of the assessment and the recommendations to support your child's learning and/or behaviour at school. A copy of the report will be placed in your child's Ontario Student Record (OSR) at school, so that your

child's teachers can use the information to help plan for his or her needs. If you do not want a copy of the report to be placed in the OSR, you need to notify the principal of your child's school in writing. With your written permission, a copy of the report can be sent to other professionals involved in your child's care (e.g., pediatrician, neurologist, psychiatrist, etc.).

## Who performs the assessment?

Within the Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, all psychological services, including assessments, are provided by members of the College of Psychologists of Ontario. (see [www.cpo.on.ca](http://www.cpo.on.ca) for more information). By law, no one may use the words "psychology" or "psychological" to represent their services unless they are members of the College. This restriction is intended to protect the public by ensuring that only appropriately qualified, regulated professionals provide services under these terms.

There are two titles in Ontario:

**Psychologists:** Psychologists are trained at the Doctoral level (e.g., Ph.D., Psy.D). They are also required to meet all of the additional requirements mandated by the College of Psychologists of Ontario, including a minimum of 1500 hours of supervised practice following graduation, two written exams, and one oral exam to demonstrate professional

competence. The letters "C. Psych." following a person's name stand for "Certificate of Registration as a Psychologist" as members of the College of Psychologists.

**Psychological Associates:** Psychological Associates are trained at the Master's level (e.g., M.A., M.Sc., Dip. C.S.). They are also required to meet the additional requirements of the College of Psychologists, including four or more years of relevant, post-masters, full-time work experience. At least 2 of these 4 years must have been completed under the supervision of a regulated member of the College. They must then complete an additional 1500 hours of supervised practice, in an area of psychology directly relevant to their intended area of practice, plus pass two written examinations and one oral examination. The letters "C. Psych. Assoc." following a person's name stand for "Certificate of Registration as a Psychological Associate" as members of the College of Psychologists.

If you have further questions, please contact your child's teacher or principal, and they can help direct you to the appropriate person.

