

**Example School District Policy
Parent-Initiated Evaluations by Private
Practitioners at Parent Expense**

February 25, 2003

On occasion and at their expense, parents obtain an evaluation of their child by a psychologist or school psychologist in private practice. These evaluations are sometimes submitted to the local school district for the purposes of determining eligibility for and seeking placement in Exceptional Student Education programs. The results of such an evaluation must be considered by the local school district in any decision made with respect to the provision of guaranteeing a free appropriate public education for the child. This advisory sets forth guidelines for the local school district when considering these evaluation results, as well as, the conditions under which a local school district may accept such an evaluation as the evaluation used for eligibility consideration.

- A. Parents and private practitioners recognize that a determination of student eligibility for an Exceptional Student Education program is more than simply administering a battery of tests. The eligibility criteria vary from one Exceptional Student Education program to another. Often, a multi-disciplinary evaluation team is required to assess a student. Most categories of exceptionality also require that parent conferences, observations, and interventions be attempted prior to referral and eligibility determination.
- B. An evaluation by a private practitioner, including a psychologist or school psychologist licensed under Chapter 490, Florida Statutes, does not eliminate the need to assure that all procedures are followed for eligibility determination. A local school district may consider the results of a private practitioner's evaluation as the school district's accepted evaluation for eligibility determination provided that the following conditions are met:
 - 1. A private practitioner must meet the credentialing requirements set forth in Fla. Admin. Code Rule 6A-6.0331 (1)(a) and should be familiar with laws and regulations regarding eligibility within Exceptional Student Education guidelines. A school district may not accept test scores if the test was not administered by a licensed practitioner, with the exception of an intern or practicum student working under the supervision of an appropriately licensed practitioner. This is documented by the supervising licensed practitioner also signing the report.

2. A private practitioner should submit a written report of findings and recommendations including test results and the interpretation of those results to a designated person representing the school district's Psychological Services Department. It is the responsibility of the private practitioner to review the results with the parents. Local school district school psychologists should not be responsible for interpreting the results of a private practitioner's evaluation to the parent(s).
3. The school psychologist assigned to the student's school should initially review the private practitioner's report to determine the credentials of the examiner and appropriateness of the evaluation. Intellectual test score results differing by 15 points or more from the results of any other existing cognitive measure(s) shall be subject to district review. The student's parent(s) and the private practitioner should be notified of any concern and be provided a copy of the district review procedures.
4. In cases in which it is determined that such an evaluation includes: a) a discrepancy, b) an irregularity and/or c) an inconsistency, the case will be made available for district review by the local school district's Psychological Services Department. The relevant test protocols should be requested from the private practitioner and a review committee consisting of at least three school psychologists shall review the data to determine if the private practitioner's results are appropriate for use as the local school district's accepted evaluation or if additional testing should be completed. The review committee should be comprised of the designated lead of the school district's Psychological Services Department and the school psychologist who completed the initial review, with the remaining member an available school psychologist on staff. If the review committee cannot determine whether to accept the private practitioner's results, the lead school psychologist of the Psychological Services Department should request permission for additional testing, at school district expense, to resolve the discrepancy. All evaluation information should then be provided to the Exceptional Student Education staffing committee for review.
5. When evaluating an individual student, a psychologist or school psychologist, whether in private practice or employed by the local school district, should not administer an intellectual test that has been administered in close relation to a previous evaluation. Preferably, a different test than last administered to the student should be given. The purpose of this limitation is to reduce or rule out the likelihood of practice effect on the scores of subsequent test administrations.
6. Local school district acceptance of an evaluation should not imply eligibility for Exceptional Student Education services. Eligibility is always determined by an Exceptional Student Education staffing committee after reviewing all pertinent data available on a student. Acceptance of an evaluation by a school district indicates only that the tests given appear to have been appropriately administered and scored by a qualified private practitioner and the reported test results will be considered in the staffing committee's final decisions regarding eligibility.

7. For eligibility determination, the local school district should consider the scores obtained from those current instruments referenced in the local Special Programs and Procedures (SP & P) Manual for Exceptional Student Education. The Stanford-Binet Form L-M, the Leiter International Performance Scale, the WPPSI, WAIS-R, and the WISC-R are generally considered outdated and are not typically used for eligibility consideration.

NOTE: This statement does not limit or govern a parent's right to obtain an independent educational evaluation if the parent disagrees with the local School District's evaluation. That right is generally governed by 20U.S.C. § 1415 (b) (1), 34 C.F.R. § 300.502, and Fla. Admin. Code Rule 6A-6.03311(4).