

If Your Child Is Having Difficulty In School, Might He/She Be Eligible For Special Education Services And/Or Accommodations?

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Peter rarely studied during high school, but maintained above average grades. However, in college these same study habits caused Peter's grades to drop significantly, landing him on academic probation. He is distractible and can't seem to get started on longer projects. His friend Amanda was recently diagnosed with ADHD and was prescribed Adderall. She was also granted extra time when taking tests. Peter wonders whether he, too, has ADHD and could qualify for academic accommodations.

Fifth-grader Beth has been able to achieve C's in her reading classes. However, despite reading her assignments 2-3 times, she still cannot remember what she reads. It seems to take hours for her to complete her homework, even with her parents' help. Beth's parents asked the school principal to evaluate Beth for learning disabilities; however, the school staff determined Beth is not eligible for an evaluation because her grades are average. Beth's parents are convinced something is not right with their daughter's reading skills, but don't know where to turn for help.

Many parents are unaware that they have the right to obtain an independent educational evaluation of their child. College students must obtain and provide independent evaluations on their own. If the student is diagnosed with a disability, the student is legally entitled to reasonable academic accommodations related to their disabilities.

Independent evaluations are typically provided by neuropsychologists trained in identifying cognitive impairments that can cause an adverse effect on education. The purpose of these evaluations is to:

1. Identify students of all ages who have disabilities or impairments, as well as needed special education services and accommodations;
2. Assist in determining eligibility for special education or related services;
3. Plan an appropriate Individual Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Accommodation Plan;
4. Determine needed related community services;
5. Suggest instructional strategies, behavior plans, and discipline policies tailored to the student, as well as ways to measure progress.

Neuropsychologists look at a broad range of abilities and skills, some of which are not usually tested by a school psychologist. The assessment may include tests which assess cognitive ability, achievement, cognitive and sensory processing, memory, language, visual-spatial and visual-motor abilities, executive functioning (such as organization and planning), attention, and behavioral, social, and emotional functioning. Some educational neuropsychologists also act as the student's advocate with the school or university.

If your child is having difficulties with his/her school work, consider obtaining an evaluation by a trained neuropsychologist. For more information, please visit my website www.kathyborchardt.com or call my office at 630-680-5494 to schedule a consultation.

Dr. Kathy Borchardt is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice, specializing in neuropsychology and behavioral medicine. Her primary patient population consists of individuals with learning disabilities, ADHD, Asperger's Disorder, or brain injury, providing evaluations, advocacy, cognitive re-training, and adjustment therapy. Dr. Borchardt also works with chronic pain patients providing nonpharmacological pain management services.

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