

**Selecting the Right Evaluator for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)**

## Why Careful Selection Matters for Students with Dyslexia

When a parent requests an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it is one of the most powerful tools available to ensure that their child’s educational needs are accurately identified and appropriately addressed. However, the quality and expertise of the evaluator conducting that IEE are just as important as the right to obtain one. A well-chosen evaluator can uncover the true reasons behind a child’s struggles and produce a report that meaningfully influences the child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). A poorly chosen evaluator, however, may produce a report that offers little more than a diagnosis—with no practical, research-based recommendations that schools are legally and educationally obligated to implement.

## Understanding What an IEE Is

An Independent Educational Evaluation is a comprehensive assessment conducted by a qualified professional not employed by the school district. Parents have the right to request an IEE at public expense when they disagree with the district’s evaluation. The purpose of an IEE is to ensure an unbiased, thorough assessment of the child’s learning profile, strengths, and needs; clarify or correct inadequate or incomplete school evaluations; and provide expert guidance for evidence-based interventions and educational planning.

## Why the Evaluator’s Credentials and Experience Matter

Selecting the right evaluator is critical. An IEE is only as strong as the professional who conducts it. Parents should ensure that the evaluator holds appropriate state licensure or certification in psychology, special education, or related fields (e.g., Licensed Educational Psychologist, Neuropsychologist, or Dyslexia Reading Specialist); has specific training and experience in diagnosing dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities; understands and applies research-based, evidence-supported literacy frameworks, such as the Science of Reading, Structured Literacy, or Orton-Gillingham–based methodologies; and demonstrates familiarity with IDEA requirements, FAPE standards, and the educational implications of dyslexia for IEP development and implementation.

## Beyond Diagnosis: Why Recommendations Are the Heart of the IEE

A diagnosis alone does not guarantee the child will receive the right services. The real power of an IEE lies in the evaluator’s recommendations—clear, specific, and evidence-based directives that guide schools in designing effective interventions. Strong recommendations should include explicit methodology (naming specific instructional Structured Literacy/Orton-Gillingham approaches, based on research, such as Wilson Reading System, Barton, or Take Flight), qualified provider requirements (teachers trained and certified in the recommended methodology), frequency and duration (e.g., 45–60 minutes per day, 5 days per week, 1:1 or small group not exceeding 3 students), and progress monitoring (how data will be collected and used to adjust instruction). Without these elements, the IEE may identify what is wrong but fail to guide what must be done.

## Common Mistakes Parents Can Avoid

Parents can avoid common pitfalls by not choosing general psychologists unfamiliar with reading disabilities, not assuming all evaluators understand dyslexia, insisting on detailed and prescriptive recommendations, and emphasizing the importance of fidelity of implementation—ensuring instruction is delivered as designed by a qualified practitioner.

## Questions Parents Should Ask Before Hiring an Evaluator

1. What are your credentials and licenses?
2. How many students with dyslexia have you evaluated in the past year?
3. What assessments do you use to identify dyslexia and related processing disorders?
4. Are your recommendations grounded in evidence-based literacy interventions?
5. Do you provide specific guidance on instructional frequency, intensity, and qualified personnel?
6. How familiar are you with IDEA, Section 504, and current dyslexia laws or guidance in our state?

## The Goal: A Roadmap to Effective Intervention

An IEE should serve as a roadmap, not just a report. When crafted by an expert who understands dyslexia and evidence-based instruction, it empowers parents and IEP teams to make informed, effective decisions. The right evaluator will not only identify what the problem is but will also lay out how to fix it—through explicit, structured, and measurable instruction tailored to the child’s individual needs.

## Remember

A diagnosis without prescriptive recommendations is like a map without directions. To secure meaningful change, parents must ensure their chosen evaluator is both highly qualified and deeply knowledgeable about dyslexia, structured literacy, and IDEA-based educational standards.