

Is your child performing optimally in school?

The first term is over and many children have received their reports. Some will have done very well and some will have performed below the expectations of their parents and teachers. If your child has under-performed, are you sure you know why the results were poor? Many parents will tell us that their children are just lazy, they do not want to study, they are interested in things other than school, they are just plain naughty or are not bright enough. But is this true? Often the child has not been assessed to really see what the problem is. There are so many possibilities why your child might be underperforming and many problems can be fixed easily if one knows what the cause is. I have come across a number of parents who did not want their children to be assessed, often because they were scared that the reason why their child is underperforming is because they are not clever enough or that there is something seriously wrong with the child. However, in my experience, this is hardly ever true. Normally children are clever enough but have learning, concentration, memory or emotional difficulties, which can often be changed easily. Hence assessing a child is always a good option to ensure that you allow your child to navigate easier through school and achieve better results.

During educational assessments, a number of tests are used to make sure that we get to the bottom of the presenting problem in order to help the child as best as possible. A detailed report is then written and the results and recommendations are explained in a feedback session.

Generally many different tests are used such as:

- **The IQ Tests**

The S-SAIS-R (senior), J-SAIS-R (junior) South African IQ test measures mental ability. It is used to evaluate the testee's strengths and weaknesses in order to obtain diagnostic information.

The test is divided into a number of subtests where some subtests measure verbal abilities and the rest measure non-verbal abilities. The results show if the child has a learning problem, a low or high IQ and it detects concentration problems, emotional problems and areas where the testee can improve scholastically to perform better in school.

- **Bender Gestalt Test**

The Bender Gestalt Test measures visual-motor integration and emotional behavior. This test assesses if the brain sees what the eyes have captured. If there is a problem then the child might have visual spatial problems, which can hinder fluent reading or correct copying of items from the black board.

- **Auditory Discrimination Test**

This test is used to see if the testee has an auditory discrimination problem. This test assesses if the brain is taking in what the ears have captured. If there is a problem the child might hear certain words differently and might not be able to distinguish between letters and hear the difference between them,

e.g. not hearing the difference between cope and coke. This can have a negative effect on spelling and hearing instructions properly.

- **Scholastic tests such as mathematical tests, reading tests and spelling tests**

The results indicate if the testee is functioning according to his/her chronological mathematical, reading and spelling age. It is important to determine if the child is on par, ahead or behind the chronological age. Determining the scholastic performance age of the child is helpful when needing to determine where improvements need to be made.

- **Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD) and DAP- Draw a Person**

The KFD shows the family dynamics, the perception of psychological support and warmth in the home environment and the emotional development of the testee. This test is used to get an understanding of the testee's emotions and his/her home environment. The DAP test is used to compare the testee's IQ score to the S-SAIS-R score and to look at emotional maturity.

Emotional screening tests are important measurements to determine if the EQ (emotional quotient) is on par with the child's IQ. If the EQ is low then the child might not perform as well in school as he/she is not emotionally equipped to master different emotional challenges. In such instances it is important to develop the emotional maturity to ensure better emotional wellbeing and performance in school.

- **Small QEEG- brainwave assessment**

The small QEEG assessment measures the different naturally occurring brainwaves, using internationally recognized EEG sites. It is generally accepted that the left side of our brain is our logical side, which is supposed to work faster than our right, more emotional side. If our brain is in a state of asymmetry we experience symptoms such as anxiety, low self-esteem, depleted energy levels and depression. If the brainwaves are too fast, they can cause stress, ruminations, worries, concentration and sleep problems.

The assessment is an extremely interesting process, showing the patterns and distribution of activity throughout the brain. We are able to see if a person shows symptoms of ADD/ADHD, memory and sleeping problems, anxiety, depression, OCD and slow task completion to name a few. Through this method, you can find out how to train your brain towards positive change and optimal functioning.

The set of assessments are generally conducted over a period of two mornings as the child needs to be alert when doing the tests. The different subtests are fun and children like to complete them. Nowadays we know so much about the brain and human behavior that there are solutions to many problems. The solutions can be as easy as changing your food, taking some supplements, practicing certain exercises to strength your eye muscles or coming for neurofeedback/brain training to enhance your brain's function. Whatever it is, allow your child to have the advantage to master their school career easier and with optimal performance for better results.

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